2BU! / C1

Newsmakers, music, athletes, gadgets, fashion that rocked 2007

METRO / A17

QC court orders Ayala Land subsidiary to pay P90M to inventor

ENTERTAINMENT / E5

Dolly Wood: Lessons that 2007 taught the stars

WORLD / A19

Thaksin to return to Thailand from exile

At long last, a cheerful Christmas in Bethlehem

BETHLEHEM, WEST BANK—ENCOURAGED by renewed peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians, Christian pilgrims from around the world converged on the town of Jesus' birth on Monday to celebrate Christmas—a palpable contrast to the sparse crowds of recent years.

The diverse mix of people included festive

A CHEERFUL/ A5

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Wednesday, December 26, 2007 ★ 7 sections / Vol. 23 / No. 18 P18 website: www.inquirer.net

Pope prays for just solutions to conflicts

VATICAN CITY—POPE BENEDICT ON Tuesday said he hoped Christmas would bring consolation to those living in poverty, injustice and war and appealed for just solutions to conflicts in Iraq, the Holy Land, Afghanistan and Africa.

In his "Urbi et Orbi" (To the City and the World) Christmas Day message, the Pope also urged people in modern societies to accept the light of Christ and warned that many human tragedies were caused by environmental upheavals.

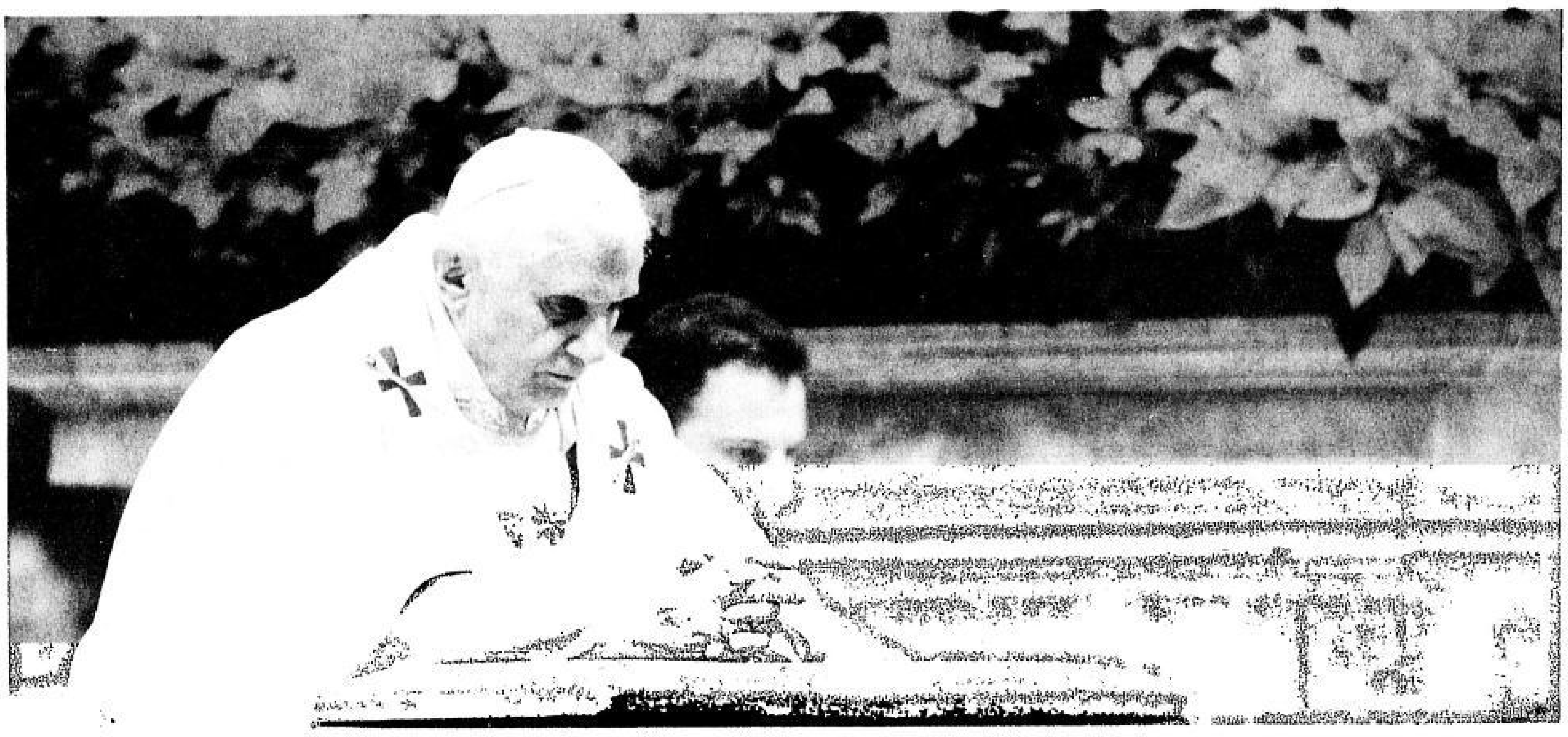
Wearing gold-embroidered vestments and a bejeweled bishops' hat, or miter, Benedict urged the crowd to rejoice over the celebration of Christ's birth, which he said he hoped would bring consolation to all people "who live in the darkness of poverty, injustice and war."

"May this Christmas truly be for all people a day of joy, hope and peace," he said in his address from the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica to tens of thousands of people gathered below under a brilliant winter sun.

The address was broadcast live to some 57 countries.

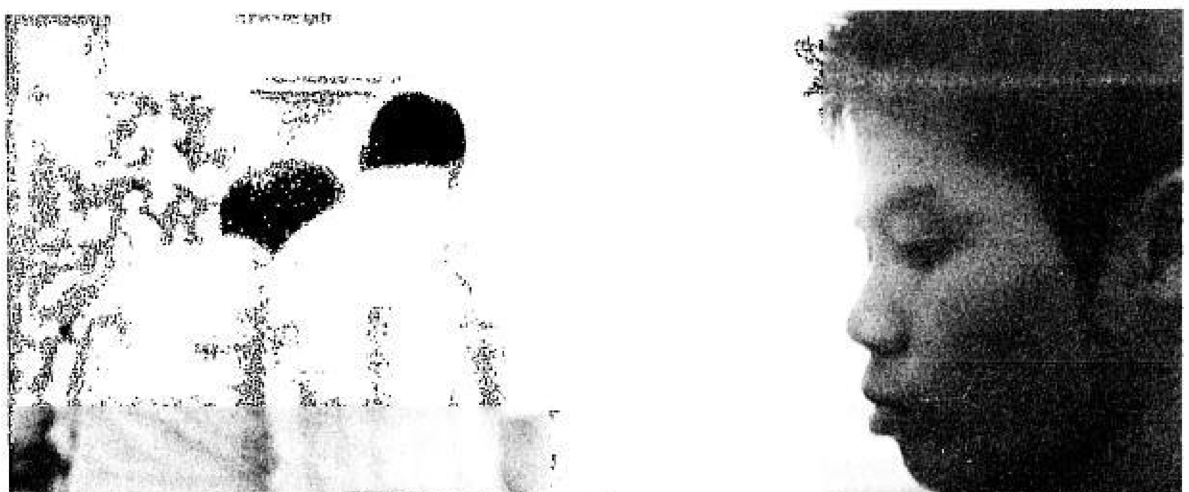
Earlier, in a Midnight Mass ushering

POPE PRAYS/ A5



POPE Benedict XVI ushers in Christmas as he celebrates Midnight Mass at the St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. AFP

'Why kill journalists?'



WHY didn't they just talk to his father instead of killing him? asks Jan Marc Lintuan, the eldest son of slain Davao City broadcaster Ferdie Lintuan. DENNIS JAY SANTOS/INQUIRER MINDANAO

Slain radioman's son appeals to gunman

By Dennis Jay Santos *Inquirer Mindanao*
and Alcuin Papa *in Manila*

DAVAO CITY—ON CHRISTMAS EVE, JAN MARC Lintuan sent his brothers to sleep. Then, he stayed up all night—for his father's wake.

Only 20 and the eldest of four sons of slain radio broadcaster Fernando "Ferdie" Lintuan, Jan Marc yesterday sent out a message to the killer of his father: "Please stop these killings of media men. If you have a deep hatred or were personally hurt by the journalist's work, why can't you just talk to the reporter and air your side? Why kill them when they are just doing their job?"

In Manila, the Philippine National Police said it would look into any possible involvement of the so-called Davao Death Squad in the murder of Lintuan, who was known for his denunciations of official corruption and government wrongdoings in his radio commentaries.

"We are looking at that link. That is one of the angles that we are looking into," PNP Director General Avelino Razon told the INQUIRER.

Lintuan, 51, was shot dead in his car the other day by a man riding on a motorcycle and wearing a metallic helmet.

Razon also said he had ordered the Region 11 police com-

WHY KILL/ A7

Medical tourism law pushed

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE PHILIPPINE MEDICAL Tourism Program (PMTP) has earned some $350 million and opened satellite offices in two cities in Europe, and is preparing for a "road show" in three other cities in the same continent next year.

And yet, more efforts are being exerted to boost the country's quiet moneymaker. Government officials steering the PMTP are preparing a Medical Tourism Bill that would "institutionalize" the thriving sector responsible for the Philippines' added prominence on the global medical map.

"We really need all the support we can get, and this includes support from our Congress," said Dr. Jade del Mundo, head of the highly successful program.

MEDICAL/ A7

Fight against corruption still on, says freed rebel soldier

By Nikko Dizon

THE DAY BEFORE CHRISTmas, former Air Force 2nd Lt. Jeveehboy "Maki" Macarubbo made the nine-hour bus trip to his hometown in Iguig, Cagayan, to surprise his parents whom he had seen only once in the four years that he was detained at Villamor Air Base.

Throughout the trip that began at 3 a.m. in Manila, the 28-year-old Macarubbo said he was thinking of how his parents, Abelardo and Myrna, and town mates would react upon seeing him.

"Then, I also thought, am I really on a bus? It was surreal yet so nice," he said in a Yahoo! message to the INQUIRER a few hours after arriving home.

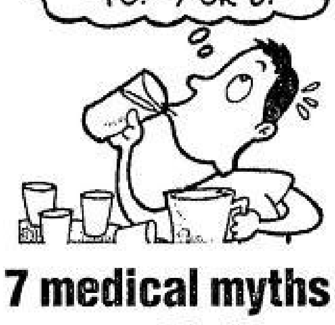
Macarubbo was obviously relishing his newfound freedom—like being able to use the Internet, a mobile phone, and, yes, walking around without being handcuffed to a military escort.

He laughed and said he had forgotten how to cross the street. When he strolled around Mall of Asia, he thought he had this big smile on his face.

It has been less than a week since the surprise release of Macarubbo and 52 other subleaders of Magdalo—a group of disgruntled junior officers who seized the Oakwood commercial complex in Makati City in July 2003.

The mass release came after

FIGHT/ A4


PANG-ILANG BASO KO NA BA 'TO? 7 OR 8?

7 medical myths exposed in journal

READING IN DIM LIGHT WON'T damage your eyes, you don't need eight glasses of water a day to stay healthy, and shaving your legs won't make the hair grow back faster.

These well-worn theories are among seven "medical myths" exposed in a paper published on Friday in the British Medical Journal, which traditionally carries light-hearted features in its Christmas edition.

Two US researchers took sev-

7 MEDICAL/ A4

SISON: In self-exile in The Netherlands. INQUIRER PHOTO

39TH ANNIVERSARY

Joma recalls birth of CPP in Alaminos

By Gabriel Cardinoza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

ALAMINOS CITY—THE COMmunist Party of the Philippines marks its 39th anniversary today, but few residents of this bustling coastal city in western Pangasinan know that the CPP was born in one of their upland barangays.

Mayor Hernani Braganza, a former member of the Kabataang Makabayan, a leftist group that went underground when martial law was declared in 1972, said he learned about this fact only in 2001. He was then the agrarian reform secretary and member of the government panel engaged in peace talks with the CPP's political arm, the National Democratic Front (NDF).

Braganza said it was CPP

JOMA/ A4

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ALAMINOS CITY GOVERNMENT

THE Navarette house in Barangay Dulacac in Alaminos City played a significant role in the founding of the CPP in 1968.

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Second FRONT PAGE

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WALA PANG BAGONG TAON ELEKSYON NA NAMAN ANG NASA ISIP?

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will have mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will experience partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers.

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	**Iloilo/Bacolod**	Mostly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	**Roxas**	Mostly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Mostly Cloudy	**Cebu**	Mostly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	**Tacloban**	Mostly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	**Gen. Santos**	Mostly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	**Zamboanga**	Mostly Cloudy
Legazpi	Mostly Cloudy	**Cagayan de Oro**	Mostly Cloudy
Calapan	Mostly Cloudy	**Davao**	Mostly Cloudy

COMPILED BY: SCHATZI QUODALA, PDI RESEARCH/12/25/07 SOURCE: PAGASA

Search for Lakas 2010 bet is on

Ruling party seeking coalition with NP, LP

By Michael Lim Ubac and Norman Bordadora

THE RULING LAKAS-CHRISTIAN MUSLIM DEMOCRATS HAS opened the selection process for its standard bearer in the 2010 elections, even as it eyes a possible coalition with either the Nationalista Party of Senate President Manuel Villar or the Liberal Party of Senator Manuel "Mar" Roxas.

In a meeting last week with Lakas congressmen, Speaker Jose de Venecia declared that "Lakas will choose its own (presidential) candidate. Nobody can dictate on us."

In other words, the party, not President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, will have the last say on who will be the standard bearer of what is currently the country's largest political party.

Our own bet

"We said that we'd like to choose our own candidate," said Lakas executive director Ray Roquero in a phone interview.

Ms Arroyo won the vice presidency in 1998 under Lakas, although its presidential candidate, De Venecia, lost to popular actor and former vice president Joseph Estrada. Ms Arroyo assumed the Presidency in 2001 when Estrada was ousted by a 4-day "people power" revolt. She ran again under Lakas in 2004, winning a six-year mandate. She cannot run for reelection.

Arroyo is Lakas chair while former President Fidel Ramos and De Venecia are chair emeritus and president, respectively.

Shallow bench

"Lakas is open to adopting candidates," said Roquero.

Roquero admitted that Lakas has a shallow bench when it comes to personalities who figure strongly in national surveys or who are likely to win the 2010 presidential derby.

"We have to admit that our bench is not deep at this time," he said.

Roquero, however, said that Lakas' national membership and machinery affords it the leverage to stay significant in the next elections.

Lakas boasts of 95 congressmen, 42 governors, 96 city mayors and 1,200 municipal mayors.

Although turncoatism is a hallmark of Philippine politics, Roquero said he was confident Lakas will remain the dominant majority party.

Names being floated as possible presidential candidates are Senators Villar, Roxas, Loren Legarda and Richard Gordon, and even Vice President Noli De Castro, he said.

Roquero revealed that "high level negotiations" are in the works for a possible coalition with the NP.

But he said talks for a possible party coalition were not limited to NP, as the ruling party was also considering Roxas' LP party.

"A Lakas top honcho has been meeting with Mar Roxas," said Roquero, but noted that the Speaker has also kept close ties with Villar, attending the NP's 100th anniversary celebration in November.

On the other hand, several Lakas members who did not want to be identified since they were not authorized to talk on the matter, told the INQUIRERthat they were pushing for the adoption of Legarda, who topped the May 10 mid-term elections under the Genuine Opposition slate.

Other Lakas members want their own "homegrown talents" to lead the party to victory such as Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando "who is courting FVR's support," said another Lakas member.

Lakas will hold a strategic planning workshop on Jan. 7 and 8 to map out their plans for 2010 and launch a party-strengthening drive, said Roquero.

It will adopt a criteria for the selection of bets and a formula for entering into coalitions with other parties, he said.

With a report by Gil Cabacungan Jr.

TALE OF TWO CONVICTS

Erap's wish: United country

By Kristine L. Alave and Jocelyn R. Uy

FORMER PRESIDENT JOSEPH "Erap" Estrada yesterday said that his Christmas wish this year was for a united country.

"Let this Christmas be the season for us to unite and celebrate our commitment to bring forth a new nation under God which is just, peaceful and prosperous," Estrada in his first Christmas message as a free man.

It was the first time since his detention six years ago that Estrada spent the Christmas season at Polk St. San Juan City as a free man.

Estrada, who was convicted of plunder and later pardoned, also thanked his supporters for standing by him throughout his plunder trial at the Sandiganbayan.

Estrada's call for unity came two weeks after he revealed that he had "forgiven" President Macapagal-Arroyo, who replaced him after he was ousted in a bloodless revolution in January 2001, and ex-Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson, his former best friend whose accusations led to his impeachment trial and his eventual downfall.

He has decided to forgive his political enemies because it was the right thing and Christian thing to do, Estrada explained.

"I have said time and again that the Holy Spirit put into my mind and my heart that to live peacefully, forget all the good things you did to others and forget the bad things that others did to you. That is why I am living peacefully now," Estrada said.

He reiterated his pledge to the poor that he will commit himself to antipoverty projects.

The former president kicked off his Christmas Day celebration with his son, Mayor JV Ejercito by attending the Misa De Gallo held at the San Juan plaza on the night of Dec. 24.

Estrada said this Christmas was the "most meaningful" yet for him, noting that this was the first Yuletide celebration in six years where he could celebrate freely with his friends and loved ones.

"I've nothing more to ask. My wish is for the country, that it will no longer be [plagued] with graft and corruption," said Estrada.

Jalosjos: Not quite orange

By Julie S. Alipala
Inquirer Mindanao

ZAMBOANGA CITY—VISITORS and food flooded the San Ramon Prison and Penal Farm Colony, some 30 kilometers outside this city, where recalled convict Romeo Jalosjos spent Christmas Day.

"There were so many luxury cars parked outside. So many people going inside and leaving the prison farm," said a resident, who asked not to be identified.

"A resident said it was the first time it has happened.

Jalosjos was supposedly released by prison authorities on Dec. 17 after he reportedly completed his life term for child abuse. But after a public outcry, the justice department recalled his release, saying the warden had miscalculated his release date.

He had sadly dubbed this an "orange Christmas," referring to the color of prison uniforms, although he has not actually donned his orange clothes yet, according to his son, Seith Frederick "Bullet" Jalosjos, Zamboanga del Norte's First District board member.

"They (penal officials) don't oblige my father to wear it," Seith told the INQUIRER in a phone interview. "He is no longer a prisoner. He has served his sentence," he added.

Besides, joked the young Jalosjos, "even if they force him to wear the uniform, they don't have the size of my father."

"All he wants for Christmas is to clear this chaos. My father is a free man and his wish is for the government to let him go and enjoy his freedom."

While personnel of the San Ramon prison refused to be interviewed, the Jalosjoses confirmed that the former congressman has been receiving many visitors since he was brought there on December 23.

According to his son, visitors included relatives, childhood friends from this city and hometown Dapitan, and even local officials from Zamboanga del Norte.

The young Jalosjos said members of the family, including his 85-year-old grandmother Angelina, have been staying with his father since Sunday "to make him feel comfortable and happy with his situation.

The entire Jalosjos family attended Mass inside the prison farm at 10:30 p.m. Monday.

"We are trying our best to lift up his spirits this Christmas," the young Jalosjos said.

"The office of the provincial superintendent is being used as his temporary sleeping quarters. Since it doesn't have anything inside except what is needed for an office, we immediately brought some mattresses and airconditioning," he said.

Town mayor shot dead on Christmas Day

By Frank Cimatu
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—IT WAS A BLOODY CHRISTmas for residents of Paracelis, Mt. Province.

The town's mayor was shot dead by gunmen as he was leaving a family gathering in Barangay Palitod, provincial and police officials said.

Mt. Province Gov. Maximo Dalog said Paracelis Mayor Cesar Rafael just came from a picnic with relatives in Sitio Siniktib when he was shot by a group of armed men on Tuesday afternoon.

Dalog said Rafael, who was in his 60s, was alone when he was attacked.

But reports from Senior Supt. Joseph Adnol, Mt. Province police director, said Rafael was with his driver when the suspects fired at their vehicle at past 1 p.m.

Adnol could not provide other details of the incident.

"This was the first time that a politician was shot dead in the province, and to think that it has to happen on Christmas Day," Dalog told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview.

"This has to be solved immediately. I want the (police) to do their investigation as soon as possible," he said.

Rafael, a long-time mayor of Paracelis, was recently elected president of the mayors' league of Mt. Province. His daughter, Ana Maria Paz Rafael-Banaag, is mayor of nearby Natonin town.

A community organizer in the province said it was surprising for Rafael to be attacked in Palitod because the village is his bailiwick.

"He owned a huge tract of land there. He even donated his house to be turned into a school there," the source said.

Paracelis is more than four hours drive from the capital town of Bontoc. The town shares borders with Isabela, Kalinga and Ifugao. *With a report from Desiree Caluza, Inquirer N. Luzon*

BCDA

INVITATION FOR PROPOSALS

Republic of the Philippines

DAMPE SERVICE AREA OF THE SUBIC-CLARK-TARLAC EXPRESSWAY

The Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) is inviting interested oil companies to participate in the bidding for the privatization and development of the 2-hectare portion of the Dampe Service Area of the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway (Sta. 21+730 Subic-bound).

Interested oil companies should submit their Letters of Interest to BCDA and must purchase the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the disposition that outlines, among others, the requirements that will enable the oil companies to participate in the bidding for the privatization.

The TOR for the disposition will be ready for distribution to interested proponents from 20 December 2007 to 09 January 2008 at the BCDA Corporate Center. A non-refundable fee of Php 20,000.00 will be charged for the TOR and payable to the BCDA in Cash or Manager's Check.

A conference among interested oil companies is tentatively set on 11 January 2008, at 10:00 a.m., at the BCDA Corporate Center. The objective of the conference is to discuss the Property, the TOR, and other clarifications from interested proponents. Interested proponents will be informed of the final schedule and venue of the conference through the contact numbers submitted to the BCDA.

Interested proponents can direct their inquiries to:

MR. VICTOR V. ZABLAN
Asset Disposition Program Committee Phase 3
Bases Conversion and Development Authority
BCDA Corporate Center, 2/F Bonifacio Technology Center, 31st St.
Crescent Park West, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City

or they can contact Engr. Valiente R. Aquino at telephone numbers 816-6666 loc. 124 and 816-1043; email address: vraquino@bcda.gov.ph

(Sgd.) **MR. VICTOR V. ZABLAN**
Chairperson, Asset Disposition Program Committee Phase 3

(PDI—Dec. 20, 26, 2007 & Jan. 2, 2008)

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH – EASTERN VISAYAS
Government Center, Candahug, Palo, Leyte

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Government of the Philippines (GOP) has received loan proceeds from Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) for the implementation of the Schistosomiasis Control component of the Help for Catubig Agricultural Advancement Project (HCAAP) in the municipalities of Catubig and Las Navas, Northern Samar.

The DOH-Eastern Visayas, through the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) now calls for the submission of Letters of Intent (LOIs) from potential bidders to apply for eligibility and shortlisting for consulting services for the implementation of the project, to wit:

1. Project Implementer for Snail Survey (project duration – 4 months)
2. Project Implementer for Prevalence Survey and Treatment (project duration – 4 months)
3. Project Implementer for Health Promotion and Advocacy (project duration – 2 months)

Interested consultants must submit their LOIs and accomplished Eligibility Documents on or before December 28, 2007 at DOH-Eastern Visayas, Government Center, Candahug, Palo, Leyte and secure the Eligibility Documents therefrom. Applications for eligibility will be evaluated on a "pass/fail" basis. Only those that are short-listed will be entitled to submit bids.

The BAC shall draw up the short list of consultants from those who have submitted Letters of Intent and have been determined as eligible both in accordance with the provisions of Republic Act 9184 (RA 9184) and its Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A). The short list of prospective bidders shall consist of five (5) consultants. The criteria and rating system for shortlisting are:

30%	Applicable experience of the consultant and its partner(s) in case of joint ventures (JV), considering both the overall experiences of the firm and the individual experiences of the principal and key staff including the times when employed by other firms;
40%	Qualification of personnel who may be assigned to the job vis-a-vis extent and complexity of the undertaking; and
30%	Current workload relative to capacity;

Letter of Intent and accomplished Eligibility Documents must be delivered by hand, through mail, or facsimile to the address below on or before December 28, 2007

A pre-bid conference will be conducted on January 18, 2008. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the IRR-A of RA 9184 on February 5, 2008. In accordance with IRR-A of RA 9184, only bids from short listed consultants will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in the Eligibility Documents. In accordance with the IRR-A of RA 9184 the contract will only be awarded to the Highest Rated and Responsive Bidder who was determined as such during the post-qualification.

The PROCURING ENTITY shall evaluate bids using the Quality Based Evaluation procedure. The criteria and rating system for the evaluation of bids shall be provided in the Instructions to Bidders.

The contract shall be completed as specified per project duration,

Eligibility Documents shall be available at DOH-Eastern Visayas BAC Secretariat, upon submission of a Letter of Intent and upon payment of a non-refundable amount of Php200.00 to the DOH-Eastern Visayas Cashier. Bid Documents will be available to shortlisted bidders upon payment of a non-refundable amount of Php800.00.

Interested consultants may obtain further information from DOH-Eastern Visayas, Government Center, Candahug, Palo, Leyte from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.

The DOH-Eastern Visayas reserves the right to reject any and all bids, annul the bidding process, or not award the contract at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

DOH-EASTERN VISAYAS
DR. MINERVA P. MOLON
Bids and Awards Committee Chair
Government Center, Candahug, Palo, Leyte
Tel. Nos. (053) 323-4999 & (053) 323-5025
Fax No. (053) 323-6517
E-mail address: chd ev@yahoo.com
Website address: www.chd8.gov.ph

(Sgd.) **MINERVA P. MOLON, MD, MPH, FPPA**
BAC Chairperson

Noted:
(Sgd.) **TEOGENES F. BALUMA, MD, MHA, MDM, FPCHA**
Head of the Procuring Entity

(PDI-Dec 23 & 26, 2007)

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Joma recalls birth of CPP in Alaminos

From page A1

founding chair Jose Ma. Sison who told him about it during a meeting in the Netherlands, where the latter has lived in self-exile since the late 1980s.

Sison, the chief political consultant of the NDF, confirmed in an e-mail to the INQUIRER that it was in a "barrio" in Alaminos where the CPP "congress of reestablishment" was held on Dec. 26, 1968.

According to Braganza, that barrio is the remote Barangay Dulacac at the tri-boundary of Alaminos and the towns of Bani and Mabini.

Sison said the meeting place was a hut near the house of the Navarettes, the parents-in-law of Arthur Garcia, one of the CPP founders. Garcia died in 1969.

Christmas Day

"We did not use the Navarette house [for the congress] but a smaller type of bamboo house used for rest from farm work," Sison said. "We had to walk for some 30 minutes from the Navarette house to the smaller house."

Sison said the CPP founders arrived in Alaminos by Pantranco bus from Metro Manila on Christmas Day in two batches, and walked from the bus terminal all the way to the site.

The place was chosen because "it was safe, secluded and distant enough from Manila," Sison said.

He said Garcia's in-laws and wife were not aware of the nature of the meeting: "They must have thought we were having a picnic."

A total of 11 delegates attended the congress, including Sison, Garcia, Carlos del Rosario and Noli Collantes, and two lookouts from a Manila trade union.

"I [will not] mention the names of the living because I do not have their permission to name them," Sison said.

Braganza said the only means of transport to Dulacac at that time was the *kalesa* (horse-drawn cart) or on horseback.

He said politicians campaigning for election had to use the dusty uphill road to Dulacac, and "it took them a day to get there."

The road has since been paved, and travel time has been reduced to 30 minutes by car.

Alaminos, home to the Hundred Islands National Park, is now also a popular tourist spot.

Hardly changed

But except for the paved road, Dulacac has not changed much since 1968, Braganza said. It is still a sparsely populated farming village surrounded by thick vegetation.

"I was never able to go back to the place," Sison said. "Thus, after 39 years, I have forgotten [its] name. We have long [referred to] the place ... as 'somewhere between Central and Northern Luzon.'"

Sison suggested that Braganza develop the site into a tourist spot and reconstruct the hut where the CPP founding congress was held.

"Since 39 years ago, the CPP has become the revolutionary party of the proletariat and the Filipino people and has been an undeniably major force in Philippine history," he said.

Braganza agreed that the CPP was "now part of our political history." He said a "marker" could be put there to indicate that the party was "born in that area."

Recalled Sison: "There should still be a tree there because one of the lookouts fell asleep on a sturdy branch and fell. I do not remember what kind of tree [it was]."

Can't stop it

The lookout was trade unionist Mariano (Ka Duma) Lacsa, who became a leading cadre of the CPP's Northern Luzon Regional Committee. He died in Isabela in the early 1970s, Sison said.

In a statement issued to mark the CPP anniversary, Sison said the Arroyo administration could not stop the "armed revolution," which he described as a "just cause."

"The Arroyo regime cannot destroy but unwittingly causes the armed revolution to advance ... It is currently the best recruiter of the armed revolution," he said, adding:

"It is, therefore, understandable why this armed revolution is indestructible and has successfully persevered against the Marcos fascist dictatorship and the subsequent pseudo-democratic regimes."

Saying that the CPP's armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), was "gaining strength and advancing," Sison belittled the capacity of the police and military in preventing the spread of the armed revolution.

He cited "many keen observers" in saying that the military and police could occupy and control only 10 percent of Philippine territory, and that "government troops could not concentrate their maneuver units on more than 10 percent of the NPA's guerrilla fronts at any given time."

3 factors

Sison said the CPP was confident that its revolution would "continue to gain strength as massive corruption in government forces the masses to join the communist underground movement."

He said three factors were contributing to the "indestructibility and success" of the CPP revolution:

- The alleged failure of the system of government, which had supposedly been aggravated by globalization and the war on terror.
- The Filipinos' "desire" for revolutionary change, which purportedly resulted from their alleged view of President Macapagal-Arroyo as "the paragon of social, economic, political and moral bankruptcy."
- The CPP's "resolute and effective leadership" of the movement.

The CPP-NPA, through party spokesperson Gregorio Rosal, had earlier declared a four-day holiday ceasefire.

He said the NPA would not launch attacks against government forces during "the traditional holiday celebrations." *(See related stories in Across the Nation, Page A13.) With reports from Jerome Aning and Delfin T. Mallari Jr.*

AFP, PNP forces put on red alert

THE MILITARY AND POLICE are on red alert and "defensive alert," respectively, for the 39th founding anniversary today of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

"These are just measures to ensure that our troops remain vigilant in the field [for] any attack that may occur during [the CPP] celebration," said Maj. Ramon Zagala, the Armed Forces' deputy public information chief.

He said the AFP's nationwide red alert took effect at noon yesterday.

The CPP and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), have declared a four-day truce on Dec. 24 and 25, and Dec. 31 and Jan. 1.

On the other hand, the AFP is observing a 22-day unilateral suspension of military operations (Somo) that will end midnight of Jan. 6.

"We must always be ready for any eventuality. Even if they have declared a ceasefire as well, we cannot just take their word for it," Zagala said.

Director General Avelino Razon, chief of the Philippine National Police, said the PNP would continue to respect the Somo declared by the military.

"The PNP is on defensive alert in connection with the CPP anniversary. We are still adhering to the suspension of offensive military operations declared by the Armed Forces," Razon told the INQUIRER by phone.

He said the PNP would only "defend communities and police stations" and other government installations from any attack by the NPA, and would "refrain from launching any offensives."

Razon also said he had instructed his regional commanders to maintain a "high level of alert" in anticipation of any NPA attack.

Both the military and the police had branded the CPP-NPA truce declaration as "insincere," saying it was made a day after the insurgents attacked a police station in Hinabangan, Samar. ***Nikko Dizon and Alcuin Papa***

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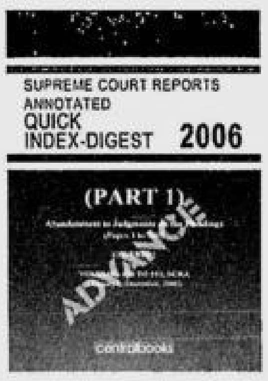

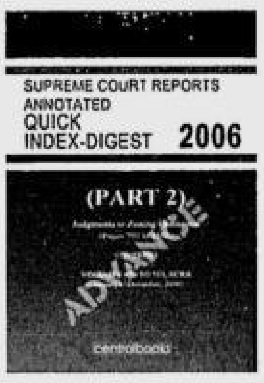

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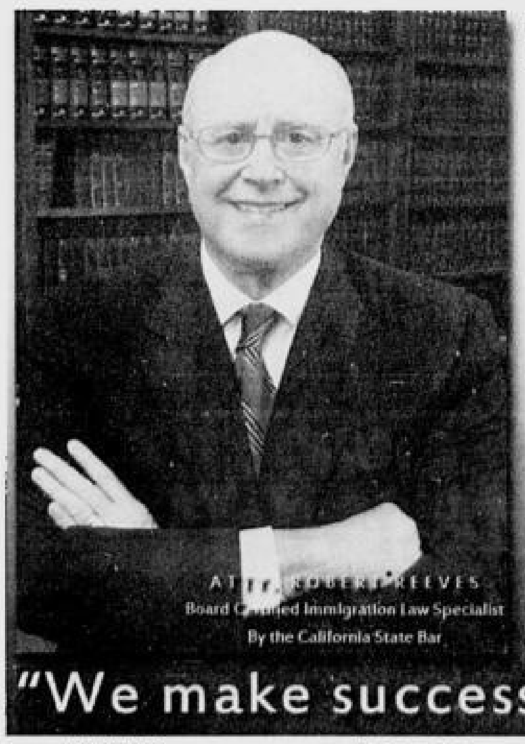
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Fight against corruption still on, says freed rebel ...

From page A1

President Macapagal-Arroyo granted the 53 soldiers executive clemency that shortened the four-year jail term handed down by a military tribunal. They had been scheduled to be set free on Jan. 27 next year.

Macarubbo said that despite indications that they would no longer spend Christmas in jail, the announcement of their release by Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr., the Armed Forces of the Philippines chief of staff, still came as a "surprise."

"All we knew was we were called for a dialogue with the chief of staff. It was only a few minutes before General Esperon entered the room that the backdrop saying 'Ceremonial Release of Magdalo officers' was set up.

"I was thinking what does a ceremonial release mean? Was this just a ceremony but we'll still be released on Jan. 27?" Macarubbo recounted.

Then, seated at the back row in the officers' clubhouse, he heard the word "release" and that it was President Arroyo's prerogative.

"I can't remember the exact words but they kept on repeating Ms Arroyo's name ... but I wasn't really listening anymore," he said. He was already thinking of how to start anew outside the military.

A graduate of the Philippine Military Academy Class 2001, Macarubbo said there had been no serious or significant changes in the AFP since the Magdalo group took over Oakwood to demand reforms in the military and the government.

"If I stay in the service and rise up the ranks, I might find myself eaten by the system and poking fun at the very principles I fought for in Oakwood," Macarubbo said.

He was only 24 and had not even entered the Air Force Flying School when he joined the Magdalo officers led by then Navy Lt. Antonio Trillanes IV at Oakwood. Trillanes, campaigning from his jail cell, won a seat in the Senate in the May elections. He remains in jail.

No regrets

The eldest and only boy in a brood of three, Macarubbo said there was no question about his commitment to the Magdalo cause. He was ready to die for it. His conviction has not wavered. He said he had no regrets.

"I am proud to be a Magdalo," Macarubbo said. "Some say the means we took in 2003 was wrong. But I believe that our claims remain valid up to now."

The fight, he said, had remained to be against corruption in the government and the AFP.

Macarubbo said he had entered a plea bargain in exchange for a shorter jail term because he knew he would be able to contribute more to the country if he were a free man, not because he had turned his back on Magdalo.

Since his release, he has been considering his options—a security officer, a graphic artist, business studies, probably at the Asian Institute of Management.

Divine providence

He may have lost some of the best years of his life while in jail, but he said he looked at his incarceration as part of divine providence. "I know there was a purpose for it. Maybe for my own maturity?" Macarubbo said.

He had been able to save enough money to start an Internet shop in his hometown in 2005. It is being managed by his parents.

Macarubbo also recently started a T-shirt printing business with his fellow Magdalo officers, like 2nd Lt. Christopher Orongan, who did not enter a plea bargain and remains detained.

He said the challenge to him and the other freed Magdalo officers was how to live life each day without sacrificing or compromising the principles they fought for four years ago.

To the other detained soldiers, Macarubbo said: "I will always pray for them. I believe the sun will rise tomorrow for the change that we all crave."

7 medical myths exposed in journal

From page A1

en common beliefs and searched the archives for evidence to support them.

Despite frequent mentions in the popular press of the need to drink eight glasses of water, they found no scientific basis for the claim.

The complete lack of evidence has been recorded in a study published by the American Journal of Psychology, they said.

The other six "myths" are:

- Reading in dim light ruins your eyesight.

The majority of eye experts believe it is unlikely to do any permanent damage, but it may make you squint, blink more and have trouble focusing, the researchers said.

- Shaving makes hair grow back faster or coarser.

It has no effect on the thickness or rate of hair regrowth, studies say. But stubble lacks the finer taper of unshaven hair, giving the impression of coarseness.

- Eating turkey makes you drowsy.

It does contain an amino acid called tryptophan that is involved in sleep and mood control. But turkey has no more of the acid than chicken or minced beef. Eating lots of food and drink at Christmas are probably the real cause of sleepiness.

- We use only 10 percent of our brains.

This myth arose as early as 1907, but imaging shows no area of the brain is silent or completely inactive.

- Hair and fingernails continue to grow after death.

This idea may stem from ghoulish novels. The researchers said the skin dries out and retracts after death, giving the appearance of longer hair or nails.

- Mobile phones are dangerous in hospitals.

Despite widespread concerns, studies have found minimal interference with medical equipment.

The research was conducted by Aaron Carroll, an assistant professor of pediatrics at the Regenstrief Institute, Indianapolis and Rachel Vreeman, a fellow in children's health services research at Indiana University School of Medicine. *Reuters*

Pope prays for just solutions to conflicts

From page A1

in Christmas, the Pope urged the faithful to set aside time in their lives for God and the needy.

Echoing a theme he has raised about an increasingly secular world, Benedict said that many people act as if there is no room for spiritual matters in their lives.

The 80-year-old Pontiff wove his sermon around today's significance of the birth of Jesus.

He drew parallels between what he perceived as modern society's refusal of God and the story of how Jesus was born in a manger because there was no space for his family at a nearby inn.

"In some way, mankind is awaiting God, waiting for him to draw near. But when the moment comes, there is no room for him," he said.

'God won't be shut out'

But the message of Jesus' birth is also that "God does not allow himself to be shut out," Benedict said. "He finds a space, even if it means entering through the stable; there are people who see his light and pass it on."

In his traditional Urbi et Orbi address, the Pope said: "May the light of Christ, which comes to enlighten every human being, shine forth and bring consolation to those who live in the darkness of poverty, injustice and war."

Christmas should bring hope to those "still denied their legitimate aspirations for a more secure existence, for health, education, stable employment, for fuller participation in civil and political responsibilities, free from oppression and protected from conditions that offend against human dignity."

Victims of conflict, terrorism

The Pope, marking the third Christmas season of his reign, said he was close to society's most vulnerable members, who were often the main victims of conflict and terrorism—women, children, the elderly, migrants, refugees and evacuees.

He warned that "ethnic, religious and political tensions, instability, rivalry, disagreements, and all forms of injustice and discrimination are destroying the internal fabric of many countries and embittering international relations."

On a day that signifies peace, he said he was close to those living in places where "the grim sound of arms continues to reverberate."

Crisis situations

He spoke of Darfur, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Lebanon, the Holy Land, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the Balkans and "many other crisis situations that unfortunately are frequently forgotten."

The Pope made another appeal for environmental protection, saying that the number of migrants, refugees and evacuees "is also increasing because of frequent natural disasters, often caused by alarming environmental upheavals."

In his Midnight Mass homily, Benedict called on the people to find time and space for God and those suffering.

He said: "Man is so preoccupied with himself, he has such urgent need of all the space and all the time for his own things, that nothing remains for others, for his neighbor, for the poor, for God."

The Pope linked the Christmas message to the Church's growing environmental concerns, referring to early theologians who interpreted Christ's role as also a healer of the Earth and universe.

'Feast of restored creation'

"He came to restore beauty and dignity to creation, to the universe: This is what began at Christmas and makes the angels rejoice. The Earth is restored to good order by virtue of the fact that it is opened up to God … Thus Christmas is a feast of restored creation."

Under Benedict, the Vatican has been taking steps toward greater environmental action, a key element of which has been its involvement in reforestation project aimed at offsetting its carbon emissions.

Benedict asked the faithful to make room for God, as well as the less fortunate, in their lives.

Space for God

"Do we have time for our neighbor who is in need of a word from us, from me, or in need of my affection? For the sufferer who is in need of help? For the fugitive or the refugee who is seeking asylum? Do we have time and space for God?"

As the Midnight Mass began, Benedict blessed the crowd of pilgrims, Romans and tourists, as he walked in a procession up the main aisle to the central altar, which was decorated with red poinsettia flowers.

As a choir sang, Benedict sprinkled incense on the altar under Bernini's massive bronze baldachin before opening the service with the traditional wish for peace in Latin: "Pax vobis" ("Peace be with you").

The faithful responded: "Et cum spiritu tuo." ("And also with you.")

Giant Christmas tree

Four children, some in native costume from their countries, brought flowers to the altar, placing them near a statue depicting baby Jesus, as Benedict joined a choir in a hymn.

For those unable to get into the midnight service there were giant screens set up in St. Peter's Square, which was made festive with a twinkling Christmas tree and the Vatican's Nativity scene.

Officials unveiled the life-size Nativity on Monday, revealing the statues of Mary and Joseph, Jesus' parents, in a huge house-like structure located next to the giant Christmas tree.

Jesus' home

This year, the scene of Jesus' birth was depicted in a recreation of Joseph's Nazareth home rather than the traditional manger in Bethlehem.

Officials at the unveiling said the shift underscored the idea that Jesus was born not just in a single place, but everywhere and for everyone.

Hours before the Midnight Mass, Benedict briefly appeared at his studio window to light a candle as a symbol of peace, blessing the crowd with the light before leaving it on the sill. *Reports from Reuters and AP*

A cheerful Christmas in Bethlehem

From page A1

American tourists, clergymen in brown flowing robes and Palestinian scouts wearing kilts and playing bagpipes.

"I'm Catholic. I always wanted to see the beginning of Christianity, the whole history. It's something you grow up with," said Kristin Obeck, a 37-year-old schoolteacher from Richmond, Virginia. She called the experience "wonderful," although she said she missed her family and church back home.

"If you can't be with family, it's good to be here where it all went down," added David Collen, 23, of Hickman, Nebraska, who is studying Middle Eastern studies at Tel Aviv University in Israel.

Despite the festive atmosphere, a heavy police deployment, the presence of Israel's massive separation barrier and unease among Bethlehem's ever-shrinking Christian population served as reminders of the lingering tensions in the region.

In the years following the 1993 Oslo peace accord, Bethlehem attracted tens of thousands of tourists for Christmas. But the number of visitors plummeted after the outbreak of the second Palestinian uprising in 2000.

Tourism has begun to recover in recent years as fighting has slowed. This year, it got a boost from the renewal of peace talks last month at a summit in Annapolis, Maryland.

Curious teenagers

While many celebrants appeared to be curious teenagers and other local residents, Israeli tourism officials said they expected some 20,000 visitors to cross from Jerusalem into neighboring Bethlehem. They said that was an increase of about 50 percent over last year, though well below the peak years.

Tourism workers handed out sweets and flowers to pilgrims, and smiling Israeli soldiers posed for pictures with travelers.

Bethlehem's governor, Saleh Tamari, said all of the town's 5,000 hotel rooms were booked.

Priests and monks, tourists, Palestinian families and Palestinian police mingled in Manger Square outside the Church of the Nativity, the site where tradition holds Christ was born.

Vendors hawked beads, roasted peanuts, cotton candy, steamed corn and Turkish coffee, as city residents watched the festivities from balconies and rooftops.

A four-story cypress tree, strung with lights, hung with red and gold globes and topped with a yellow star, towered outside the church.

Santa regalia

Children and teenagers strolling through the square wore red-and-white Santa Claus hats, with some wearing full Santa regalia. Balloons bobbed from vendors' stands and strings children clutched in their hands. After nightfall, the square was lit in a sea of red and yellow lights and Christmas stars.

"This year is much better than the last seven years for tourism," said shopkeeper Jacques Aman, whose wooden handicrafts shop offered crosses, rosaries and nativity scenes. "The atmosphere is better in general. There is relative calm, from the security standpoint."

Palestinian scouts, some wearing kilts and berets adorned with pompons, marched through the streets playing drums and bagpipes. Throughout the evening, choirs and orchestras performed hymns and Christmas carols in a multitude of languages.

Speaking to reporters as he came out of prayers at a Bethlehem mosque, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas expressed hope that the renewed peace talks would bring about an independent Palestinian state in the coming year.

"We hope that this year will be the year of independence for the Palestinian people. God willing, this will be the year of security and stability and economic prosperity for the Palestinians," he said.

Annual procession

Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah, the top Roman Catholic official in the Holy Land, began the Christmas celebrations with his annual procession from Jerusalem to Bethlehem.

Sabbah could only enter Bethlehem after passing through a massive steel gate in Israel's separation barrier—a stretch of concrete slabs built to keep suicide bombers from reaching Israel. Israeli mounted policemen escorted Sabbah, in his flowing magenta robe, to the gate, and border police clanged it shut behind him.

In his Christmas homily delivered at Midnight Mass, Sabbah delivered a politically charged appeal for peace and love in the Holy Land—and independence for the Palestinian people.

"This land of God cannot be for some a land of life and for others a land of death, exclusion, occupation, or political imprisonment," said Sabbah, the first Palestinian to hold his position.

The barrier was just one of the reminders of the area's lingering troubles.

Hundreds of police were deployed in Manger Square and on neighboring rooftops, and before celebrants started flowing in, bomb squads walked through the streets sweeping cars and buildings for explosives.

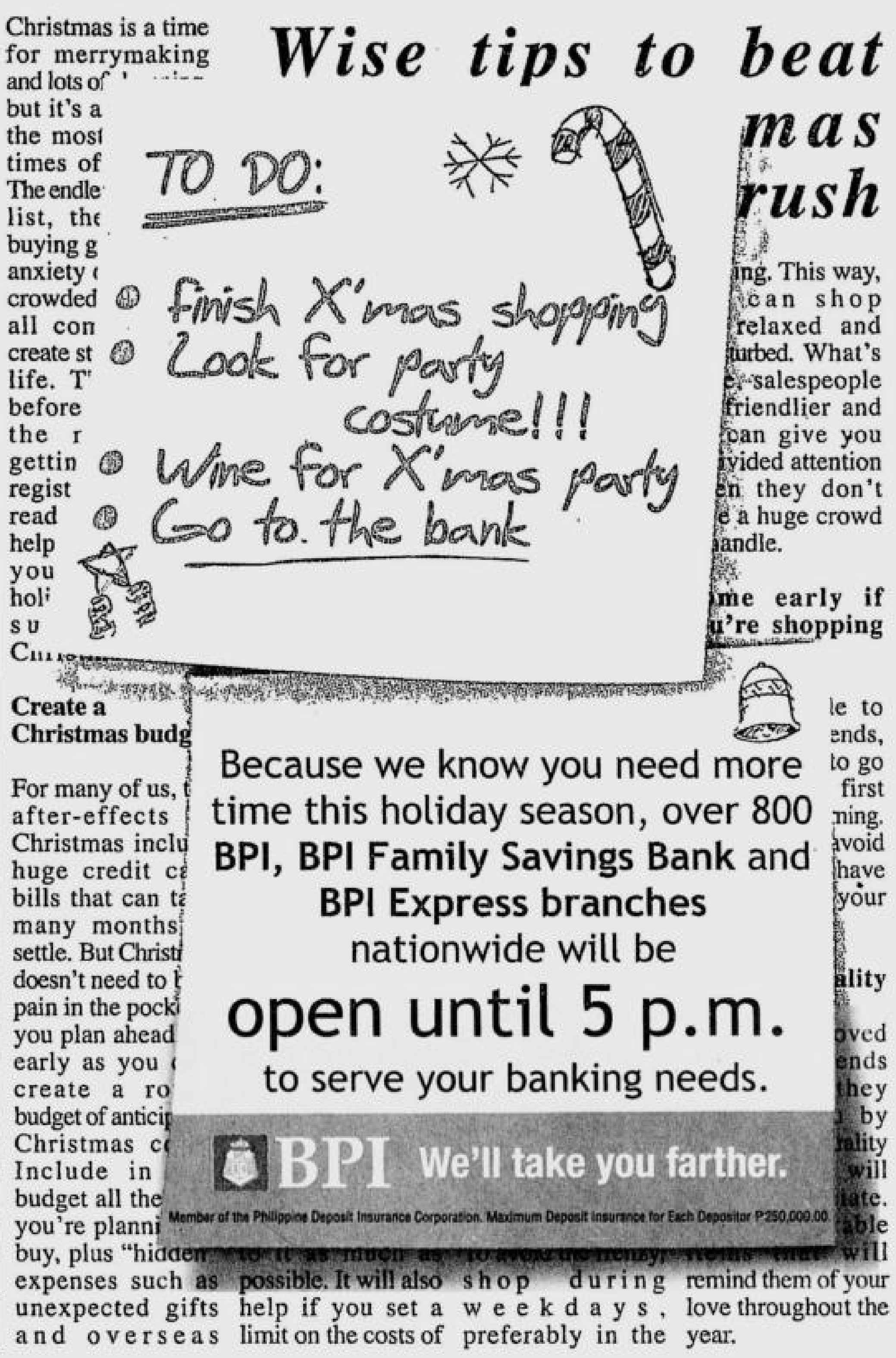
Exodus of Christians

Years of violence with Israel, infighting among rival Palestinian factions and economic hardship caused by the barrier have all contributed to the departure of a growing number of Christians from Bethlehem. Officials say from 35 percent to 50 percent of the town's 40,000 people are Christian, compared to 90 percent in the 1950s.

Johnny Giacaman, a Bethlehem native who now lives in the United Arab Emirates but returned this year to visit his family, said he was among the people who have left.

"There is nothing for young people here," he said, standing outside his family's gift shop. "Christians are leaving in high numbers. I am an example. If this continues, in five to 10 years the Church of the Nativity will be a museum."

In his homily, Sabbah criticized religious extremists and lamented the dwindling number of Christians. "To all of you Christians in this land, you who are tempted to emigrate, you who are the object of everyone's preoccupation, I say to you what Jesus told us: Do not be afraid," he said. *Report from AP*



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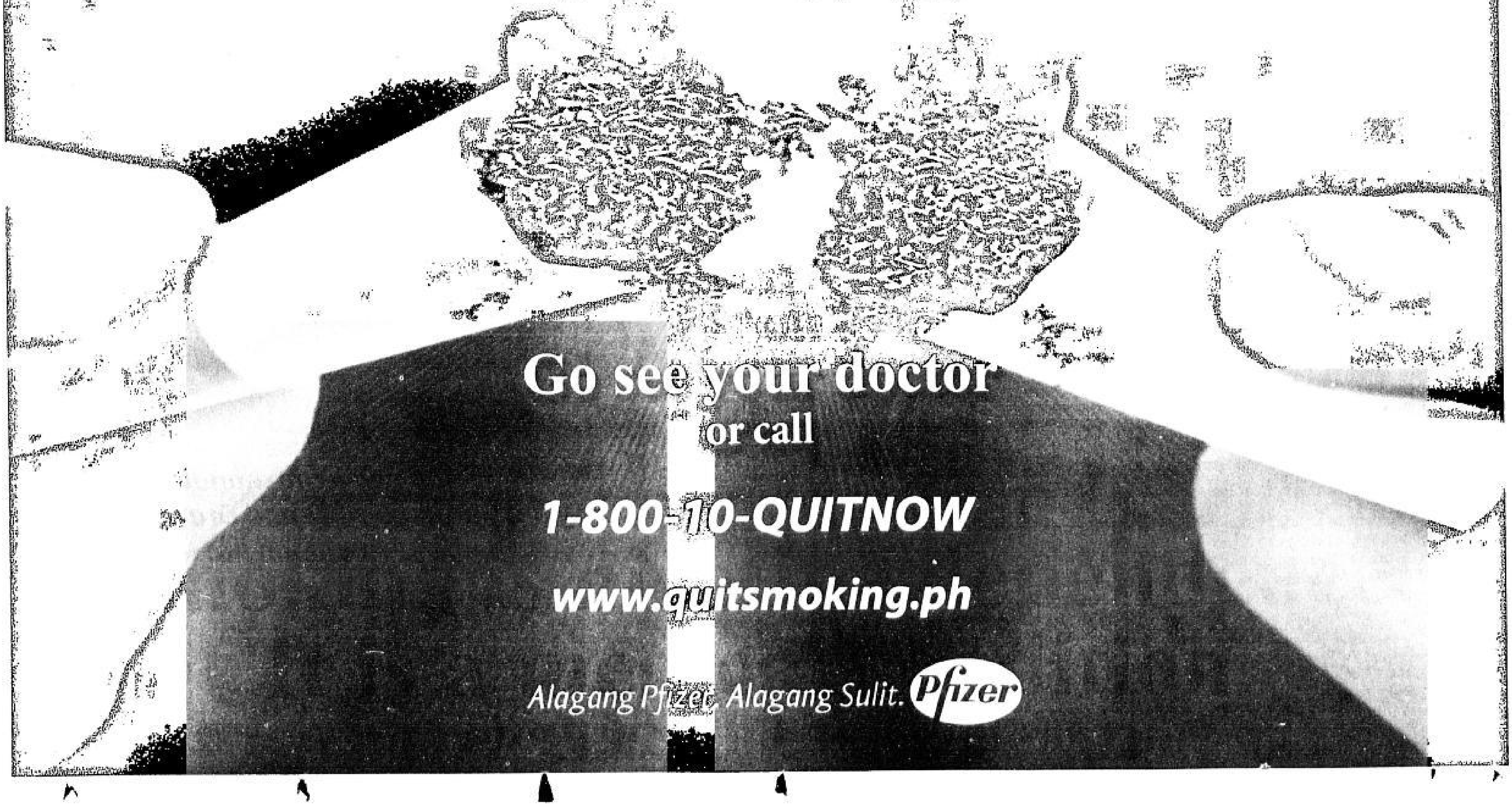

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Cops release artist's sketch of suspected killer

By Allison W. Lopez

THE KILLER WAS STOCKY AND HAD A mole on the upper right side of his lips.

That was the description which a minor gave to the task force looking into the Monday morning murder of radio commentator Ferdie Lintuan in Davao City.

With the help of the minor, whose identity has been withheld, investigators have come up with an artist's sketch of the motorcycle-riding assassin.

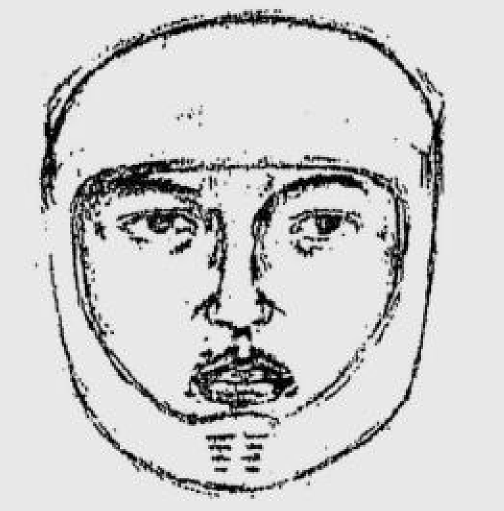
Task Force "Batman," coined after the name by which Lintuan was popularly known, is composed of the Philippine National Police-Criminal Investigation Detection Group, PNP Regional and Davao City police investigators, and the National Bureau of Investigation-South Eastern Mindanao Regional Office (Semro.)

Killer was muscular

In its progress report yesterday, a copy of which was obtained by the INQUIRER, the NBI-Semro said the witness, whose identity was withheld, had described the gunman as "muscular."

He also wore a helmet, was believed to be 5'7" to 5'8", and estimated to weigh 75 kilos.

Investigators had to rely on the minor's description because Lintuan's companions at the time he was shot in his car—Edgar Banzon and Lucio Ceniza—had said they did not see the assailant's face because they "instinctively ducked" when the shots rang out, the report said.



ARTIST'S SKETCH of Lintuan's suspected killer

Escape routes

The dxGO broadcaster was driving along R. Castillo Street, Barangay Duterte, Agdao, Davao City, when the assassin, riding tandem on a red Honda XRM motorcycle with an accomplice, shot him twice with a .45 cal. gun.

As part of its investigation, the NBI-Semro will try to track down the possible routes taken by the suspects from the crime scene, the report said.

The NBI will also look into the cases Lintuan was involved in prior to his death. These included a complaint at the Land Transportation Office in Davao concerning a taxi driver who refused to take a passenger, leading to the driver's firing.

NBI-Manila team

A team of 5-10 senior agents from the National Bureau of Investigation in Manila are going to Davao to conduct an inquiry.

The Department of Justice had ordered the creation of the team.

In a memorandum, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez directed NBI deputy director for regional operations services, Reynaldo Esmeralda, and deputy director for intelligence services, Ruel Lasala, to "immediately form a special team that will investigate the killing, identify perpetrators, gather evidence against them and ensure their protection."

"The slaying of a member of the press is a direct assault upon press freedom and this should not be countenanced," Gonzalez said.

Esmeralda said the NBI Manila team would coordinate with the PNP and NBI regional units in Davao City, while the NBI Tagum and General Santos City district offices would provide support.

The Manila team will be led by NBI-National Capital Region executive officer Rommel Vallejo and Criminal Investigation Division head agent Romy Bon Huy Lim.

Medical tourism law pushed

From page A1

The draft of the bill is expected to be completed next year, and Cibac Rep. Joel Villanueva is being considered as its sponsor, Del Mundo said.

The idea is to enhance the partnership between the government and the private sector to further boost the program, he said.

According to Del Mundo, the Philippines is running fifth among Asian countries in the medical tourism industry. The field is topped by Thailand, followed by India, Singapore and Malaysia.

3 'high-end' fields

With a Medical Tourism Law in place, the PMTP is expected to encourage more local scientists to venture into other promising areas such as cancer cellular immunology, stem-cell therapy, and regenerative medicine.

These three "high-end" fields are the program's latest features, and the government has opened offices in Paris and Prague to introduce these to the European market, Del Mundo said.

So far, he said, the three procedures had drawn some 30 European patients.

"These fields are the future of our medical tourism program," Del Mundo said.

In simpler terms, he said, the Philippines now had the technology to develop a new kidney in an ailing patient, as well as the capability to treat cancer through "immunotherapy."

Particularly involved in the three high-end procedures are National Kidney and Transplant Institute, The Medical City, St. Luke's Medical Center and Lung Center of the Philippines, Del Mundo said.

The PMTP will be further promoted in the "road show" scheduled early next year in Milan, Berlin and London, he said.

'Why kill journalists?'

From page A1

mander, Chief Supt. Andres Caro, to look at all other angles.

Shadowy group

The Davao Death Squad is a shadowy vigilante group known for executing, sometimes in broad daylight, drug dealers and other criminals in Davao City.

It was also believed to have been behind the killing of hard-hitting journalist Jun Pala in September 2003. Pala was a critic of Davao Mayor Rodrigo Duterte.

Critics have tried to link Duterte to the group, but the mayor has repeatedly denied any such link.

Police Director Jefferson Soriano, chief of the PNP Task Force Usig, said investigators were looking into three possible motives.

Police theories

Soriano said one possible motive might have to do with Lintuan's biting commentaries.

Another area being looked into concerned a case Lintuan had filed against another radio station in connection with his firing supposedly without justifiable reason.

Still another theory involved a complaint Lintuan had filed against a taxi driver that led to the confiscation of the driver's license.

Soriano also said Lintuan criticized illegal logging activities in the Compostela Valley and Davao Oriental.

Task Force Usig is a special police unit that investigates killings of militants and journalists.

Lintuan was the fifth journalist killed this year and the 54th media member to be murdered under the Arroyo administration, according to the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines.

The international media watchdog group Reporters Without Borders called on the Arroyo administration to "quickly track down" the murderers of Lintuan.

"On this Christmas Eve, the Philippine press community has again been hit by a terrible murder," the group said on its website.

"The method used leaves no doubt that it was a targeted killing of a journalist … President Arroyo and the national police chief have a duty to give the local investigators all the resources they need to catch the gunmen and those who put them up to it."

Suddenly, they were orphans

Lintuan's murder suddenly left his four sons orphans. His wife died of lung cancer two years ago.

"Christmas is not merry for us," said Jan Marc, who had rushed to the crime scene shortly after news broke out about the shooting.

"I didn't expect that he will die this way (ambush)," he said in an interview with the INQUIRER.

Although several people had sent him and his brothers food for *noche buena*, Jan Marc said there was no reason for them to celebrate Christmas.

He stayed up all night to accept visitors at Cosmopolitan Funeral Homes, a cousin said.

Jan Marc's three brothers—Franc Ferdinand, 18; Steve, 15; and Von Carlo, 10—slept in sofas at the funeral parlor.

With their father gone, Jan Marc, a third year International Studies student, said he would now have to find work for them to survive.

Franc Ferdinand is also in college, while Steve and Von Carlo are in high school.

Lintuan was on his way home from work at radio station dxGO when he was shot. The two other broadcasters with him, Lucio Ceniza and Edgar Banzon, were unhurt.

People's Park

"We will try to look if this is work-related, a personal grudge of a person he might have slighted on the air or [if this is related to] his campaign against the communist New People's Army," Senior Supt. Jaime Morente, city police chief, told the INQUIRER.

Raul Antopuesto, dxGO station manager, said that in the past weeks, Lintuan had been criticizing the recently opened "People's Park," a multimillion-peso project of the city government.

Lintuan alleged that the trees planted in the park were overpriced, Antopuesto said.

Lintuan also survived an attack by gunmen inside his radio booth at Radio Rapido, another station, in the late 1980s.

Presidential peace adviser Jesus Dureza said six of Lintuan's colleagues died in that attack.

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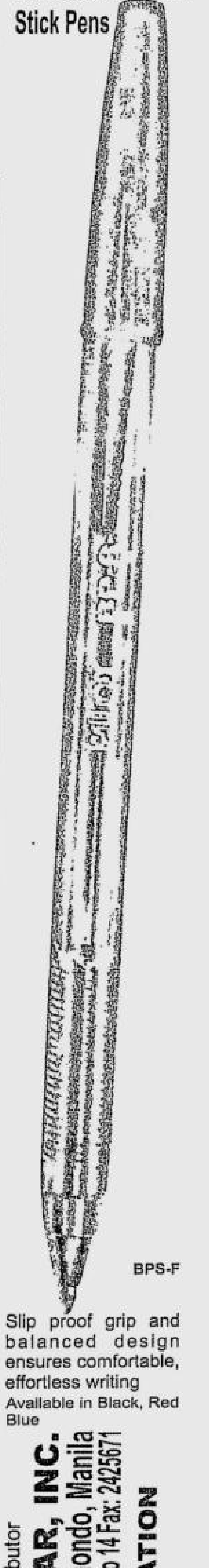

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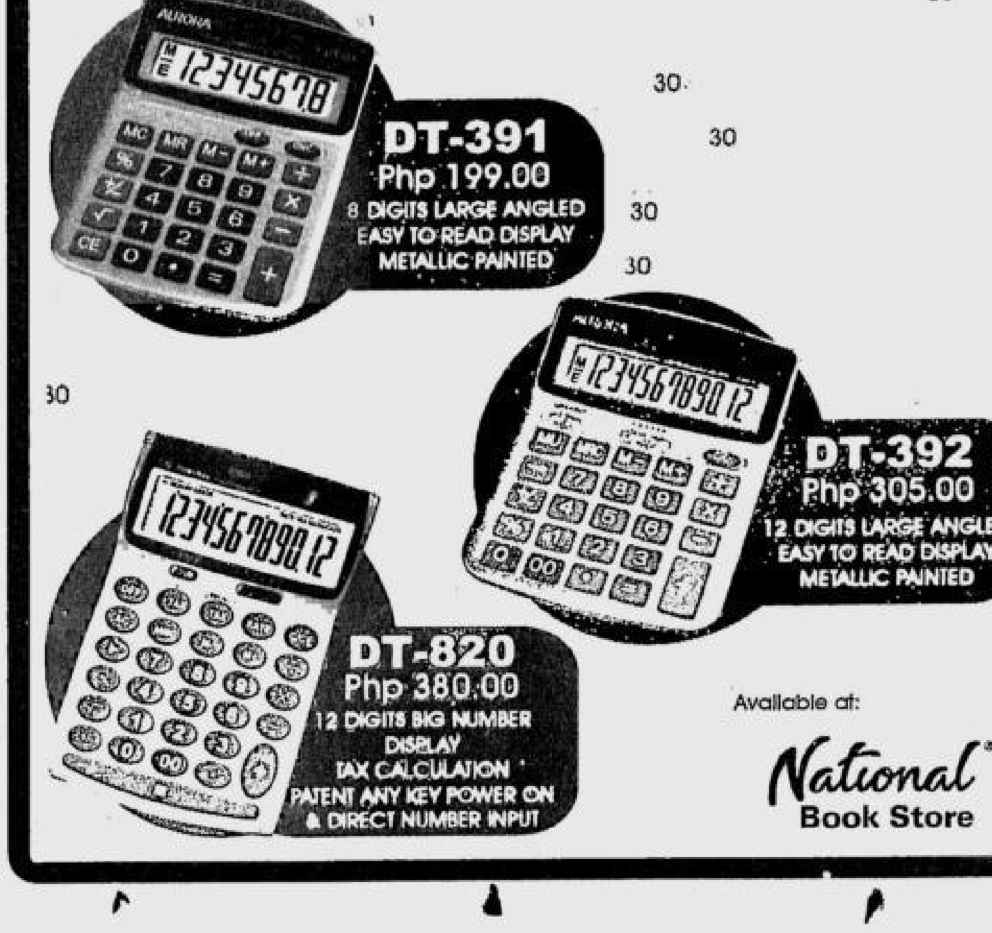

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Missionary or terrorist? Egyptian out on bail

By Jeoffrey Maitem
Inquirer Mindanao

COTABATO CITY—An Egyptian missionary arrested last week for allegedly plotting a Christmas bomb attack was released by police over the weekend after a local court allowed him to post bail.

Chief Supt. Joel Goltiao, police director in Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, told the INQUIRER by phone that Cotabato City judge Cadir Indar had granted the petition for bail of Mohammad Sayed, a teacher of Arabic language and Islamic religion at the Mahad Islamic School here.

Sayed, identified in wire reports from Cairo as sheikh Mohammed al-Sayyid Ahmed Mussa, was arrested on Dec. 19 when a police and military team raided his rented apartment and reportedly found materials for homemade bombs, 60-mm mortar ammunition, timing devices, nine-volt batteries, schematic wiring diagrams for blasting, and a military manual of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

Bailable

"His illegal possession of explosives case is bailable. However, the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) has asked the immigration office in Manila to issue a hold departure order against him," said Goltiao, who also revealed that the case would be "covered by a political decision."

Sheikh Mussa, with backing of Egypt's ministry of religious affairs, is reportedly the subject of top-level negotiations.

Reports from Cairo also identified him as an envoy of Sunni Islam's highest seat of learning, the Al Azhar. The institution's grand *imam* had told Egypt's official Mena news agency that Mussa was arrested "by mistake" and that he was personally following up the case of Sheikh.

AFP reported that Egypt's religious affairs ministry issued a statement saying that Sheikh Mussa was being well treated but that there were contacts at the highest level between the two governments to try to secure his release.

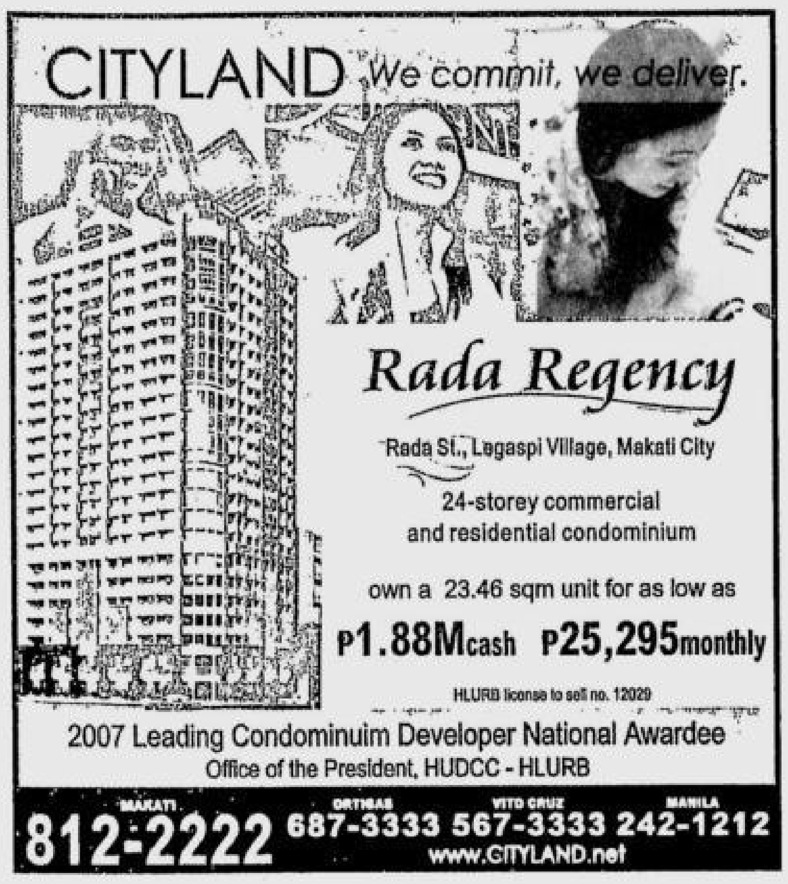
"Sheikh Mussa is a man of faith who represents a prestigious religious institution," the ministry said.

Egyptian Ambassador Salwa Moufid Kamel Magarious visited Sayed over the weekend and said his presence in Mindanao as an Islamic missionary was covered by a bilateral agreement between the Philippines and Egypt.

But the government's Anti-Terror Council yesterday bristled at the claim that Mussa was arrested by mistake.

"We stand by the work of our operatives in the field," Ricardo Blancaflor, Justice Undersecretary and spokesperson of the Anti-Terror Council, told the INQUIRER by phone.

With reports from Nikko Dizon, AFP



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Fighting the real enemy

EDITORIALS

AS WALT KELLY'S CARTOON CHARACTER POGO once said, "We have met the enemy, and they are us." This, in a nutshell, is the problem facing the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Bravery, dedication, all the martial virtues are present, often to an extraordinary degree, in the officers and men of the AFP. The problem is that the AFP is also riddled with the corrupt, the greedy, the abusive and the stupid. And as for arms, for the protection of the state and our soldiers' lives, the AFP never has enough, and what it has is both antiquated and poorly maintained.

Aside from the experience in waging war gained by our troops during the bloody fights in Mindanao in the 1970s, in many respects the AFP remains bogged down in the past. Its armaments more often than not belong in World War II movies; its leadership structure is top-heavy; its tactics and methods rooted in the age of Gen. Douglas MacArthur, with its over-optimistic faith in a citizen army, instead of a purely professional force.

And yet, from its grossly corrupt and bloated form achieved under martial law, the Armed Forces has gone a long way to redeem its institutional reputation. Rebels and putschists may have tarnished its image, but on the whole, our soldiers have adapted well to a republican regime grounded in civilian supremacy over the military. Our soldiers have proven themselves ours: they are the soldiers of the people and not of a clique that considers itself superior to the whole.

Still the root cause of inefficiency and lack of morale remains: low salaries, insufficient benefits and antique weaponry.

It was hoped that under President Fidel V. Ramos, an ex-general, the military would be given its due. What Ramos did, instead, was pay off old debts by filling the civilian bureaucracy with ex-military appointees. And then, during a time of relative plenty, he allowed billions to be earmarked for the modernization of the AFP—and then promptly ordered that the funds be diverted to "prestige" projects, such as the Centennial Expo, that have yielded nothing but scandal.

Are we advocating guns before butter? No, but a nation that considers it necessary to maintain a standing army must give its soldiers the arms with which to justify their existence. In real terms, we do not have a real AFP, we have a glorified Philippine Constabulary. This is a situation that cannot be allowed to fester because it will result in what everyone fears: resentment and restlessness among the ranks. Our soldiers deserve better than what they're getting. And they can serve better if they get what they deserve.

We offer up this reflection because this is the time our soldiers get to go home, and enjoy, for once, peace and quiet away from operations in the field.

By now the meager bonuses of the troops will have been spent, and many of our fighting men and women can only look forward to a new year saddled with debts, and without their fair share of benefits. Meanwhile, their officers play the political game, and party up in luxury.

What comes next

AFTER THE FIREWORKS, THE DRINKING, THE parties and toasts—what's next? We are at a new beginning, approaching a new year, but we are the same people.

We are not seers; it is not for us to predict what will be. But we can see what we will not be if we do not change certain things.

There will be no hope for this country if its best minds continue to be sent abroad. If its young are reared by distant relatives, and grow rootless and wild in the process. If its population continues to grow unabated. If its millions continue to be deprived of decent homes, land on which to live and the just fruits of their labor. If their leaders continue to rob, steal and cheat to an extent that in the public imagination has already surpassed the larcenous record of Ferdinand Marcos. If its forests continue to be denuded, its rivers filled with filth, its air poisoned and its agriculture is kept backward by fighting land reform.

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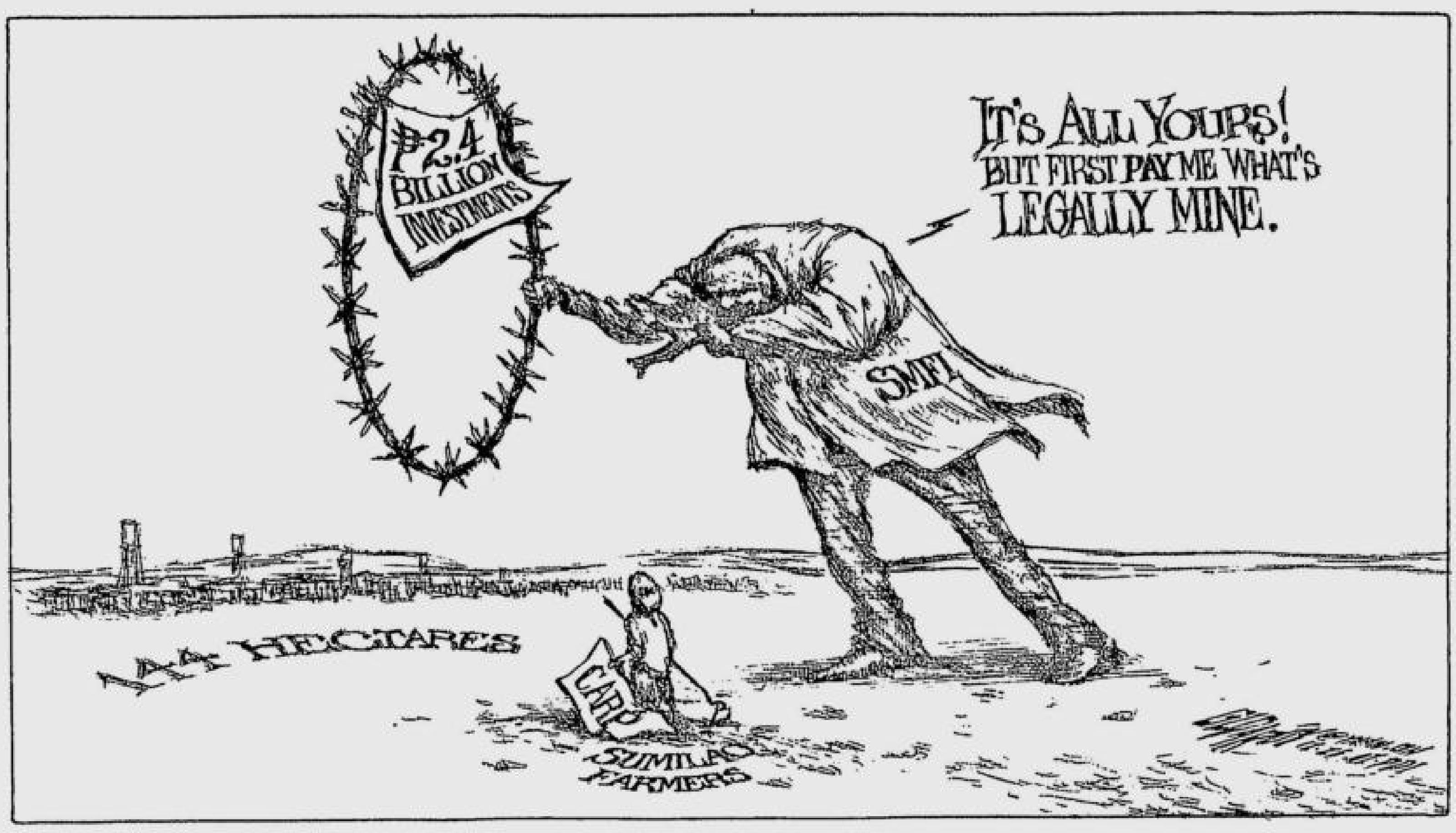


Requiem for Adrian Cristobal and Peping del Rosario

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

IT IS A SAD CHRISTMAS FOR JOURNALISTS with the deaths of two colleagues: first, Peping del Rosario, photographer of The Manila Chronicle and later chief photographer of the Daily Express, and, a few weeks later, Adrian Cristobal, writer and intellectual. With their deaths, newsmen lost dear friends, esteemed colleagues and accomplished craftsmen.

Peping was one of the magazine photographers of the Chronicle's This Week Magazine when I joined it. Magazine staffers have enviable jobs in newspapers. They go to the provinces for special stories, usually with a photographer in tow, all at company expense. My favorite photographer was Peping.

One of my favorite assignments with Peping was a visit to Manuel Arguilla country in Nagrebcan, La Union. With Johnny Gatbonton and Amante Paredes, who is an Ilocano, we stayed in the Arguilla house in Nagrebcan for less than a week and visited all the places and characters in his short stories. I remember the *kakawati* trees were then in full bloom and Nagrebcan was suffused with their pink blossoms that rival the famous cherry blossoms of Japan. We swam the river and explored it on a raft. Peping took all the pictures.

We devoted several spreads of This Week to Arguilla country. Peping's beautiful photographs were captioned with quotations from Arguilla's stories.

Much, much later, we were planning a similar story on NVM Gonzalez's *kaingin* country in Mindoro, with NVM himself coming with us to show us the scenes in his stories, but death overtook him before we could do it.

I was planning another trip with Peping to the Batanes islands which, at that time in the mid-1950s was like the end of the world, when, on the very day we were set to leave, he was taken ill. I tried to get a substitute photographer but no one wanted to go to a god-forsaken place called Batanes. So I borrowed a camera and went alone.

At that time, there was only one plane flight a week to that northernmost islands of the Philippines. On the day that the plane that was to take me back to civilization was due to arrive, the sky was overcast. We could hear the plane circling overhead but obviously the pilot could not see the Basco runway so he flew back to the mainland. That meant I had to wait another week to go home.

When I got back to the Chronicle, I gave my films to Peping to process. When he saw the photographs, he could not stop regretting that he was unable to go with me. "Never mind, we'll go together next time," I told Peping.

But that next time with Peping never came. When I went again to Batanes, much later, it was with Jun de Leon and it was for a cover story in Weekend Magazine of the Daily Express. Peping later became the chief photographer of the Express.

Even when we were working for different newspapers, Peping and I never lost touch. We had lunch together at the regular Monday lunches of Plaridel. One week after a lunch at Plaridel, I received a phone call. It was Peping's daughter. Peping had collapsed at home and died in the hospital.

* * *

Adrian Cristobal I knew perhaps longer than his wife did. I first met him when I was a student of NVM Gonzalez. NVM taught writing at three universities: the University of Santo Tomas, University of the Philippines, and Philippine Women's University. He regularly invited his best students to night discussions at his home, first in Singalong, then at the UP campus. That was how the student writers of the three universities came to know each other and became friends. Though Adrian never graduated from UP, he hung around with the UP writers and became a member of the Ravens, and that was how I came to know him.

Years later, when I was managing editor of The Evening News, one of my reporters told me about Adrian. He was jobless and could I get him into the Evening News? At that time, our newspaper was in the middle of a campaign to amend the RP-US bases pact. I knew Adrian was a good writer, so I took him in as an editorial writer. Because of the Evening News' campaign, the bases pact was renegotiated and a better treaty signed, for which reason the newspaper won journalism awards. Adrian won the award for best editorial writing.

That gave Adrian a revitalized career in journalism, and he never tired repeating that it was because I hired him in The Evening News. The rest is history. Adrian rose to become a publisher and columnist of several publications.

One week before he died, we visited him at the Makati Medical Center. A long-time heavy smoker, he was diagnosed with lung cancer. His kidneys and liver were also failing. He was due to undergo dialysis to assist his failing kidneys. When he saw me, he called me to his bedside. He asked me about dialysis: Is it painful? How often?

"Dialysis is no big deal," I told him. "It does what your kidneys can no longer do—cleanse your blood. It does in four hours what the kidneys do in 48. You have to undergo dialysis three times a week. After each dialysis, you feel normal and you can do your thing."

"Is it painful?" he asked again.

"Yes, it's painful, but only for a few seconds. It's like a virgin being deflowered," I joked. "It is painful while the needles are being inserted into you, but once they're in, you don't feel anything anymore."

Adrian laughed. He still had his sense of humor.

He was due to be dialyzed for the first time the next day and I think he dreaded it. But after our conversation, his fears vanished.

It didn't save him, however. A week later, Adrian was dead.

Adrian Cristobal, writer

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I COULDN'T HELP BUT CHUCKLE WHEN I saw Adrian Cristobal's picture last Sunday accompanying Lito Zulueta's article on him. I don't know if that was his favorite picture, but I've seen it so many times, not least in this newspaper when he used to write for it, to wonder if it wasn't so. The picture shows him in the throes of thought, a fist pressed to his chin a la Rodin's "The Thinker," his brow knitted in concentration, his expression not without disdain.

I remembered that one of the Ravens (I don't recall now if it was Pick Aprieto) asked him once why he liked to scowl in public when he laughed all the time in private, particularly in the company of friends with the aid of libation. Adrian replied, laughing, that the only way you could be taken seriously by the public was if your face was set in a frown. If you smiled a lot, you would be dismissed as frivolous. Especially, he said, if you were as good-looking as he.

"A quite cynical person, possibly acquired in the practice of journalism," Elmer Ordoñez assessed him in retrospect. I'd disagree with the "cynical." Skeptical maybe, bitingly satirical maybe, slightly disillusioned maybe, but not cynical. I always thought Adrian was far too irreverent, sacrilegious, and mischievous to be cynical. He wore the mask of snobbery but he harbored a heart made of fluff. He was a sucker for a sob story, and all his life had been ripped off by friends and strangers who had a talent for telling it.

Adrian believed in one thing fervently, and that was writing.

The last time I saw him was exactly one month before he died last Saturday, a couple of days before I left for abroad. His daughter, Celin, had told me that Makati Med had pronounced that he had stage-four lung cancer, and I knew it was as ironclad a death sentence as could be slapped on anyone, to go by friends who had gone away that way.

I was surprised to see him in good shape and in reasonably good spirits in his hospital bed. He put down a book he was reading and greeted me, "*Buti napasyal ka* (Good of you to drop by)." It was about 10 p.m., most of his visitors (he had quite a crowd that day, mostly writers) had been there earlier but had already gone. When he learned I was going to London, he asked me to get him a Times Literary Supplement diary/calendar to jot his notes down on. He was old-school, surrounding himself with literary accoutrement, the pen-and-ink-type tools of writing. He had the delicate palate to go with the robust appetite.

Talk drifted to writing. He expressed envy for the times when writers and intellectuals ruled the world and had the pleasure, and excitement, of one another's company. He wondered at some point why we couldn't have the courage to write about the most personal things about ourselves without fear of offending some people. The great writers had done so. Celin, who has inherited her father's irreverence, asked him why he hadn't yet written about the loves of his life. He snorted.

Before I left, the nurse came in to take his blood pressure, chiming, "How are we feeling?" Adrian replied with mock belligerence that it wasn't a reasonable question to ask anyone who had to endure the indignities of a hospital bed. That is how I will remember him, raging against the dying of the light in his own quiet and perfectly literary way.

He was satirical in the way that Rizal was satirical, because it suited his temperament best, because he belonged to the same tradition, when letters and learning and sophistication meant the world to the world. It's this time of year that you miss him most because he was never one to pass up Rizal Day, having himself spoken many times at the celebrations in the Shrine. He wasn't shrill (which unfortunately is often the only way you can make people listen to you these days), he was sly, preferring to point out national foibles with wit and subtlety. Alas, the wit and subtlety were often lost not just on the public but on their victim. I remember once that he offered faint praise to someone (whose identity is best left secret, this is Christmas after all) in a column and ended up being thanked profusely by the fellow.

Years ago, Adrian wrote a book on his other favorite Filipino, Andres Bonifacio, called "The Tragedy of the Revolution," where he talked about the brilliance of the Katipunan having been founded by a plebeian and the benightedness of a society that was unprepared for it. That society included the revolutionaries who thought they were best led by someone with social distinction, like Emilio Aguinaldo. Adrian might have written his own epitaph there, though in a rather oblique way.

His own tragedy wasn't that society was unprepared for him, it was that society had lost interest in people like him. In people like Franz Arcellana, Nick Joaquin, Wilfrido Nolledo, Doreen Fernandez, all of whom died in one fell swoop some years ago without grinding this world to a halt. Like Icarus falling into the sea in Breughel's painting, to a world oblivious to it. Adrian was one of the last of a dying breed, a breed of people who loved writing and writers and wanted the world to do so, too. Alas, increasingly vainly: It's all the country can do now to love reading, let alone writing; it's all this country can do now to love people who think, let alone people who write.

I don't know that Adrian ever became cynical or bitter over it. My last look at him in that hospital bed suggests he never despaired at the thought. And I do recall that one of his favorite jokes was something a writer-friend of his did during their youth. The fellow told the girl of his dreams, "I love you," and was promptly rejected. Unfazed, the guy said: "Who cares whether you love me or not? I'm just telling you I love you."

Maybe Adrian said that too, laughingly, before he went.

Mangy, stinking, bathless shepherds

COMMENTARY

John J. Carroll, S.J.
John J. Carroll Institute on Church and Social Issues

SHOCKING AS IT MAY BE TO OUR IMAGES OF the well-scrubbed shepherd boy with a lamb in his arms before the manger of the Lord, the shepherds of Jesus' time were a despised lot. True, they can be seen as representing the great ancestors of the Jewish people: Abraham and Isaac and Moses and David, all of whom were shepherds. But by the time of Christ, shepherds, living as they did out in the fields without water to perform the ritual ablutions of the Jews, were seen as outside the law. Thus a scripture scholar writes that "Mangy, stinking, bathless shepherds are in their ritual uncleanness an encouragement for all who lack religious status."

Yet they were the very first to be called to worship the newborn King. Here we see a hint of what is to come in the Lord's public life when He ate with publicans and "sinners" and announced, "I have not come to call the self-righteous but sinners to repentance."

Thus, I thrill on Christmas Eve at the Panuluyan as enacted by the young people in one of our chapels at Payatas: Joseph and Mary, the latter heavy with child, making their way painfully along the road asking for a room for the night, then entering the chapel, Mary stooping down behind the altar and then standing up with the Babe in her arms, carrying it to the *belen* as dancers whirl and the chapel rings with songs of joy to the Lord.

I thrill just as much to what takes place on Christmas Day, when these same young people sneak into the garbage dump in the morning, bringing invitations for a Christmas party at the chapel to 100 scavengers who are so poor that they must work even on Christmas. In the afternoon, they are given a meal at the chapel, foodstuff to be taken home to their families, a talk on the meaning of Christmas, and a chance to share their own fears in small groups. It ends with the "Magnificat," Our Lady's hymn of praise to God Who takes care of the poor.

Many lessons come out of this experience. At the meal served them, some of the scavengers ask for plastic bags in order to take some of their own food home to their families. Last year, there were apples to be handed out; a benefactor insisted on supplying them over the protests of a young Jesuit who thought that apples were too expensive and that the money could better be spent on other foodstuff. But when the apples were handed out, there were broad smiles of appreciation; they symbolized that Christmas has really come, and perhaps also the extravagance of God in giving His Son to us.

There are other stories as well. The regular church-goers in the chapels were asked this year each to contribute a can of corned beef or Vienna sausages to go with the pasta meal which would be handed out. On one occasion, a young boy came up after Mass and said, "A can of corned beef? We don't have enough money for rice." But his sister chimed in, "Never mind, we will give the can of corned beef." A woman came up with some coins, saying that she and her companions did not have the money to buy a can each, but they had pooled what money they had, to make their contribution. And some of the cans of beef or sausage came gift-wrapped! Another reflection perhaps of the extravagance of God.

Then there is the prayer group of mothers, also in Payatas, who put on a Christmas party for their children, while permitting each child to invite a friend. Many invited children of scavengers or even scavenger-children, dirty and unwashed, to join with them.

The sad part of it is that this generosity and good will, perhaps for lack of organized outlets, may well be dissipated after Christmas as the scavengers go back to the dump and others go about their business. Even sadder is the fact that the structures which force people to work the dump even on Christmas Day—the land-owning system and legal system generally as well as government priorities, policy and practice—remain firmly in the control of the elite. Christ in His public life was not content with eating with publicans and sinners; He attacked the religious structures which oppressed the people, and this ultimately led to His death. And He taught a set of values which would undermine the oppressive economic and political structures.

The challenge of Christmas is not only to provide immediate assistance to those in need, but to bring it about that they will no longer be in need. In this context, the case of the Sumilao farmers is doubly instructive. First, the history shows how the law can be used to advance the interests of the wealthy at the expense of the poor. The law then must be reformed, including the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law. Secondly, it shows that there are deep reservoirs of potential support, among the middle class, Church groups and others, for those willing to stand up and sacrifice for justice.

My New Year's wish then for Philippine society is that support for the Sumilao farmers will not dry up now that they are home, and that the values of compassion, sharing and justice, so evident in recent weeks, will take organized form and make it unnecessary for anyone to work the garbage dump next Christmas.

Food finds and favorites

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

THE FEASTING ISN'T OVER YET, EVEN IF, BY the time you read this, you might be suffering from indigestion or a hangover and might be hankering for simple fare like *ginisang munggo* (with broth flavored with ham bone) or even *tuyo*.

But this is also still the time to be gifting people, and as a gift to readers out there, my family and I have decided share another listing of food finds that they might want to stuff into their Christmas stocking, or input into their digital organizer for quick reference when the need arises.

First, the holiday staples. The fruitcake has become a joke, with some maintaining that there is really only one fruitcake in the world—it just gets recycled year after year. Well, not if it's the "Fruitcake Filipino." I first tasted it, would you believe, more than 20 years ago when somebody gave one to Millet Mananquil of the Philippine Star, when I was still working there. I've never forgotten that one slice, but unfortunately, Millet couldn't remember where it had come from. Then some weeks ago, I stumbled upon an article about it in Food Magazine, and found out that the fruitcake was an authentic original Filipino "invention" (Millet must have received one of the first finished products) of the Rita Ritz company, which is famous for its organic teas.

I called up Rita Ritz and ordered fruit cakes for my family and for gifting, and when told that each cost P350, I objected that the article had put the price at P300. "Oh, did you read the magazine article?" asked the clerk who took my order. "We forgot to update the price, but all right, you can have it at the old price." So the folks at Rita Ritz are accommodating, as well as truthful!

When we finally bit into "Fruitcake Filipino," every morsel testified that I had not been wrong about my initial verdict. A friend to whom we gave a fruitcake even texted us, on Christmas Eve, just to report that the fruitcake was terrific! Part of its charm is that you can really taste the fruit slices on top and incorporated into the molasses-soaked batter: *langka*, pineapple, mangosteen, and even prunes.

The sad news is that I have lost both my copy of the magazine and the address of Rita Ritz in Project 6. But if you e-mail me a week from now, I might have the data available for you!

* * *

SOME months ago, restless after his early retirement, the hubby decided to give full bent to his culinary inclinations and decided to take lessons offered at Amici, that incredible restaurant in Don Bosco Makati that we discovered while keeping vigil over an ailing brother at Makati Med.

Pie's culinary instructor at Amici was Chef Giorgio, who had consulted with various Italian restaurants in town and taught Italian cooking on the side. For eight Saturdays, Pie took lessons in pizza-making, pasta preparation and bread-making along with housewives, budding chefs and even a pair of luxury liner cooks whose Italian boss wanted them to master Italian cuisine. Pie has since put the lessons to good use these days as pizza, pasta and focaccia have become his standard repertoire at our Tagaytay weekend home.

Unfortunately, shortly after the lessons ended, Giorgio left Amici when the Don Bosco fathers decided to sell it. Then just this month, Pie discovered that he had set up his own restaurant, called Volare, at the Gateway Mall in Cubao. We went there for Pie's birthday dinner and feasted on crisp, crunchy pizza and huge platters of pasta. The sight of two tables occupied by Italian diners only boosted our confidence that we had chosen our restaurant well.

One note of caution: I was wondering if the restaurant would be playing that Italian classic "Volare" and discovered that it played nothing but the song—in all its possible variations—on its sound system. A real danger is leaving the restaurant with LSS or "last song syndrome," with "Volare" impossible to extricate from your brain for the next few hours.

* * *

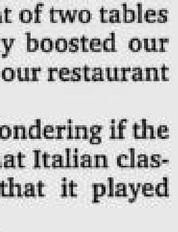
BECAUSE we've been spending so many weekends in Tagaytay and nearby Alfonso, where "Inaron Abong" (Pangasinense for "Beloved Home"), our weekend residence, is located, we've become somehow "connoisseurs" of the eateries in the area.

We've long been regulars of Sonya's, both of the garden restaurant and the bed-and-breakfast, but these days, Sonya Garcia, our friend who's largely responsible for making Tagaytay such a trendy destination, has decided to expand her menu. For weddings, she says, couples can now choose either her standard menu of salad, bread and dips, and pasta (supplemented by roast chicken or poached salmon), or her "Filipino" menu developed by her band of chefs. In her "*panaderia*," lorded over by her former driver-turned-chief baker, Sonya also offers rich, moist chocolate cake, yummy cheese *hopia* (her best seller, she says), crisp, buttery Oh…tap (her wording), pinwheel cookies and even excellent home-made peanut butter.

Some years back, I wrote about Buon Giorno!, the restaurant owned by our good friends Linda and Mark Floro, at the Cliff House complex. So successful has it become, that Buon Giorno! is soon to open a branch in Manila, at the Pure Gold building along Shaw Boulevard in Mandaluyong. One morning some months back, Pie and I decided to drop by Giorno for breakfast before making our way to Inaron Abong. We seated ourselves on the opium bed tucked in a corner of the balcony, the site of many wedding proposals, we were told, and while fog slowly crept up the ridge and threatened to envelop us, we feasted on eggs benedict, pancakes and fruit slushes, washed down with hot coffee and tea. It was a morning for relaxing and basking in the chilly air, and reveling in our decision to locate, at least part-time, in this mountain enclave.

After the feast

LOOKING BACK



Ambeth R. Ocampo

THIS EARLY, I'M PLANNING A POST-CHRISTmas and post-New Year's Eve party for friends because most of the parties I attended this season were either connected to work and, of course, family. It is always nice to get friends together and share yet another festive meal, as if we have not enjoyed quite a lot this month. One wonders though how simple or elaborate the post-Christmas party should be. If people placed a diet at the top of their list of New Year's resolutions, then I will provide a good excuse to break it.

Five years in a monastery conditioned me to look forward to the numerous feasts in the Church calendar that was an excuse to dispense with the silence that normally accompanied meals. One cannot truly appreciate the joy of dinner conversation unless you have been deprived of it. On a feast day, "special food" was prepared—meaning meat, sugar and carbo-loading—particularly welcome after the Holy Week fasting. On the eve of Easter Sunday, after saying grace, the abbot would then exclaim the wonderful words, "*Benedicamus domino* (Let us bless the Lord)," made even more special with the addition of two "Alleluias," because they are absent from the 40-day Lenten liturgy. To this, the community would reply "*Deo gratias* (Thanks be to God)," also with a double Alleluia, and that was the signal for talk and laughter. Chatter would mingle with the tinkling of glasses and flatware, and everyone was in good cheer, except a few grouchy souls of which we are blessed everywhere both in and out of a monastery.

Perhaps it is my imagination or the fondness with which I look back to an earlier phase in my complicated life, but during silent meals monks made minimal noise with tableware. The silence could be so stifling that one would be hard-pressed to contain laughter when an audible fart broke the peace. Once it was just the fart-like sound from a near-empty mustard bottle being coaxed to season a bland piece of meat that brought the house down.

Anyway, the day after a feast, the community would be quiet again and I would watch the abbot eat a very lean meal, sometimes just soup and bread, or a fish dish. When I gave him a knowing look, he would say, "*Post-festum* (after the feast)." Fish it was for him, but *paksiw na lechon* and left-overs it was for me in a vain attempt to stretch the feast.

Post-festum it will be in the first part of January 2008, but the food will not be simple because we have to deal with all the hampers and baskets under the Christmas tree. Thus, I invited friends over for a Christmas left-over party. The only dish cooked specially for the occasion will be sour *sinigang* to foil the sweets. We will have fruit and green leafy vegetables to balance out the cholesterol from processed meats, sausages and cheeses. I'm looking forward to slicing a very large, dark and rather obscene *chorizo de Pamplona* that came from my annual supplier of *jamon Serrano*. The regular supplier of cheese apologized because there was little or no *Manchego* to be found this year, so he replaced it with Japanese persimmons and the sweetest of Korean pears. There were little or no *Chistorras de Navarra* to be had this year, so it will be replaced by Ilocos Norte *longanisa*, not the small plump ones from Ilocos Sur, not the short shriveled ones from Guagua, Pampanga, or Lucban, Quezon. This Ilocos Norte type is truly "*long-anisa*," because it is one lengthy sausage with no partitions. Sometimes called "never-ending," it comes in a bag by the kilo coiled like a snake, or, if you have a more earthy imagination, it resembles the twisting monster found at the bottom of the toilet bowl *post-festum*.

There was a lot of bread received this year: freshly baked loaves with raisins or sweet meats dusted with pastry sugar to simulate frost and snow. We received the familiar unmarked white cardboard box that contains individually wrapped, *queso de bola* enriched *ensaimada* from the now famous Cunanan kitchen. More traditional *ensaimadas* from Pampanga come with a distinct flavor because these are baked in stone *hornos* and made with lard.

The closest you can get to traditional *ensaimada* in Manila would be at Hizon's in Ermita, which is unmatched by anything mass-produced by Red Ribbon or Goldilocks. National Artist for Literature F. Sionil Jose often treats guests to Hizon's a.k.a Za's Café, and uses these *ensaimadas* to describe what is not so good in Filipino culture. Using a fork or spoon, he would push an *ensaimada* down to the plate, to make a point that some people are just that, made of fluff. Dolphy is a regular Hizon's customer, but even with his fortune, he half-complains that the price is steep. During Christmas, you can order a giant *ensaimada* from Hizon's the size of a new-born carabao's head. It's actually an overgrown *ensaimada* trying hard to impersonate a fancy cake.

Finally, what Christmas left-over party will be complete without fruitcake? I only received two this year (one I had to beg for, because it is truly the best fruitcake in the universe). I once wrote about the miraculous multiplication of the fruitcake. There are actually only half a dozen fruitcakes in the world, endlessly recycled so that their number appears to be in the thousands. Well, one fruitcake won't be shared or recycled this year, and that makes only five recyclables for 2008. I will have my cake and eat it, too.

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

A gift to the world

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY VOTED overwhelmingly last week in favor of a resolution calling for a global moratorium on the use of the death penalty.

The Philippines played an important role in that resolution, yet that news didn't seem to have made it into local media. I learned about it through the Internet edition of the National Catholic Reporter (NCR), an American weekly paper.

NCR had reason to feature the resolution, which was co-authored by 10 countries: Albania, Angola, Brazil, Croatia, Gabon, Mexico, New Zealand, the Philippines, Portugal and East Timor. Columnist John Allen noted that eight of these countries have Catholic majorities. He didn't name them, but I thought it'd be useful if I took a bit of detour and identified the two countries without Catholic majorities: Croatia and New Zealand.

Allen's column focused on the Catholic influence behind the moratorium. Italy, although not a co-author of the resolution, has been staunchly anti-death penalty and played a strong diplomatic role behind the resolution. Besides Amnesty International, an Italian Catholic group, called Community of Sant 'Egidio, was active in pushing for a UN resolution.

There's reason for the Philippines to be proud about this victory at the UN. Besides co-authoring the resolution, the Philippines also played a key role in saving it from being voted down. During the deliberations on the resolution, Egypt proposed an anti-abortion amendment to attach to the anti-death penalty resolution. It was clearly a diversionary tactic because many countries oppose the death penalty but not necessarily abortion. The Philippines and the Vatican (which has UN observer status) intervened, saying they would support a separate anti-abortion resolution, but did not want the abortion issue to be "instrumentalized" by being attached to an anti-death penalty position.

Allen says this move saved the resolution. In the end, 104 countries voted in favor while 54 opposed the resolution. There were also 29 abstentions and 5 absences. The countries opposed to the resolution were the United States, China, Iran, Sudan, Singapore, several Muslim countries and, curiously, a bloc of small Caribbean countries.

Cultural differences

It was not the first time such a resolution was filed with the UN. In 1994 and 1999, similar resolutions were filed to abolish the death penalty but were voted down. This time around, Amnesty International cited the increase in the number of countries that had abolished capital punishment as proof of changing world opinion. The Philippines was, again, in the limelight, because we had abolished the death penalty in 1987, restored it in 1993, only to abolish it again in 2006. The UN resolution also urges nations not to restore the death penalty once they have abolished it.

The debates in the UN were heated, with opposing countries mainly arguing that such a resolution infringed on national sovereignty.

Most European countries have abolished the death penalty; in fact, one of the requirements for membership in the European Union is that they do not use capital punishment. The example of the EU shows how politics is shaped by history and culture. In this case, there is the influence of Christianity, going back to Christ's teachings about charity and forgiveness.

But while Christianity laid the foundations for an anti-capital punishment ethos, Christians and Christian nations were often quite violent over the last 2,000 years, employing some of the most hideous forms of capital punishment against heretics, infidels and, well, anyone who dared oppose their authority.

It was Western secular liberalism, with its emphasis on individual rights, that eventually converged with early Christian teachings to crystallize the distinct anti-capital punishment movements of the 20th and 21st centuries. Progress was initially slow. In 1977, there were only 17 countries that had abolished the death penalty, mostly in the West. Today, there are 90 abolitionist countries from all the continents, with another 43 classified as "de facto abolitionists" because they have not executed anyone in more than 10 years.

Sadly, the United States has come out almost as a global deviant. Its Supreme Court suspended executions in 1973 but capital punishment was again allowed starting in 1976. Today, many American states no longer use capital punishment, but there are some that use it quite liberally. Texas, for example, has had more than 400 executions since 1976.

China leads the world with more than 5,000 executions this year. It isn't communism behind this insistence on capital punishment but a Confucian legalist ethic, with its view of humans as inherently weak, and having to be controlled through law and order. It's not surprising that Singapore, with its strong Confucian orientation, also clings to capital punishment and actually has the highest number of executions in relation to population.

Most Muslim countries have capital punishment, but Islamic law allows payment of "blood money," where the offender can offer money to the family of the victim as restitution. If the money is accepted, the offender can be saved from execution.

Christ

Allen notes that UN resolutions often have little effect, but in this case, it does mark a "new moral consensus" among nations and "renders the situation of those states that continue to put people to death at least a bit more embarrassing."

When we still had the death penalty, I argued that for as long as we used capital punishment we couldn't argue against Filipinos being executed by other governments. Today, with capital punishment abolished and with the UN General Assembly resolution, we stand on higher moral ground when we try to save Filipinos overseas who have been sentenced to death.

This is not a small matter. This year alone, government officials had to negotiate with foreign governments, mainly in the Middle East, to save 19 Filipinos from execution. The Department of Foreign Affairs is still monitoring another 33 cases of overseas Filipinos sentenced to death.

The arguments against the death penalty now often center on justice, particularly the possibility of wrongful convictions. Certainly, in countries like the Philippines with inefficient and corrupt police, that risk has always been very real, with fall guys often hauled in and convicted.

Still another concern is that the death penalty can be used against political opponents. That specter remains with us in the Philippines. Even without the death penalty, the Philippine government has been implicated in many disappearances and extrajudicial executions of political dissidents.

It's been pointed out that Christ was a political prisoner too, and a victim of capital punishment. In that light, the UN resolution was in a way an appropriate Christmas gift to the world.

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The nation's real problem

WHAT CONRADO DE QUIROS NOTED IN his column "Dysfunctional" (INQUIRER, 12/17/07) is the mind-boggling spectacle not just of a government that has attained unprecedented levels of evil, but also a citizenry that is oblivious to corrupt practices because political, religious leaders and the media blame others for faults that they do not squeeze out of their own systems.

De Quiros is right to say that it's not just this government that is dysfunctional, this whole country is, that is why if any change is to be genuinely achieved, then we as a people must change our attitudes and accept personal responsibility for corruption.

This means not giving in to extortion even if it means waiting in long lines. This means not cheating in personal tax obligations. This means obeying traffic rules even when everybody is violating them. This means not patronizing gambling in any form because it destroys our value system. This means a whole lot of self-sacrifice for the sake of righteousness. This means a kind of moral and spiritual renewal that can be achieved by a summation of personal decisions to do what is right.

Yes, we are a dysfunctional nation because we cannot go beyond the superficial cause of our national problem. The moment we realize that we ourselves are to blame, then we can go ahead with our lives as a better nation because we'll have no alternative but to mend our ways.

—GUS COSIO,
guscosio@yahoo.com

Revolution from within will make People Power unnecessary

IT'S CLEAR AS THE BLUE SKIES ABOVE that, at this age and time, People Power revolt has died a natural death, that it is now a thing of the past, that the Filipino is either sick and tired of it or just too old for it.

Bringing down an establishment, or a government for that matter, will need new tactics, the kind that suits the lifestyle and mind-set of today's generation.

The call to topple the government must touch and move all classes of people. That call must be—or at least sound—heroic, original and full of substance. It should excite the intellect and inspire spontaneous action. Spontaneity is the element and the prime mover of People Power.

Catch phrases like "moral obligation," "Gloria resign," even if whipped out with a show of guns and bullets, are stale and worn-out. Worse, if the marchers are paid or still to be paid. But far more loathsome to the public is the sight of property destroyed, like what happened at the Peninsula.

We are a peace-loving people. It goes without saying that our county needs reforms and changes. The people in government and all of us should heed the call of conscience for a revolution from within.

—LOURDES OBEN SANTOS,
lobensan@yahoo.com

Cruz had economy's real problems wrong

NEAL CRUZ IS TAKING A LOT OF THINGS for granted, but I agree that the Philippine economy and the peso aren't as strong as President Macapagal-Arroyo would like the public to believe.

Cruz wrote (INQUIRER, 12/12/07): "Prices were much lower during the administrations of Presidents Ferdinand Marcos, Corazon Aquino, Joseph Estrada—even that of Fidel Ramos. And I don't mean only the oil that we import but also the rice, vegetables and fruits that we grow and the fish that we catch. In fact, home-grown agricultural products and domestic fish are more expensive than imported ones. Which means the Arroyo administration cannot even sustain our agricultural output."

The price of oil affects everything. Doesn't Cruz think oil affects the cost of making chemical fertilizers, transporting of fertilizers and food, running mills, living, etc.? I could go on and on. But the point is, oil is used almost in all economic activities and its effect is felt not just in the pump.

Cruz said: "If Ms Arroyo learned anything in the school of economics, it should have been that in a nation with a healthy economy, everybody would be prosperous, there would be no poor people."

No sane economist would make such a promise! Ask Cielito Habito. There will always be some unemployed and poor people. The economy is a dynamic thing and jobs can become obsolete overnight with the creation of new jobs. In addition, look up the economic theory of Non-Accelerating Inflation Rate of Unemployment which states that full employment cannot be achieved without hyperinflation. Communists are the only people who will promise such a thing and, so far, their kind has failed to accomplish even half the living standards of a capitalist economy.

Before Cruz criticizes Ms Arroyo for being a bad economist, he should first study economics. Then he would realize that Ms Arroyo isn't practicing many of the things she learned from her study of economics. For example, 99 percent of economists are for free trade. But she cannot fully pursue it—unilaterally or multilaterally—because of politics and because it is unpopular. There are many other examples, and Cruz's ranting does not help us focus on the real problems of the economy.

—MARK BELO,
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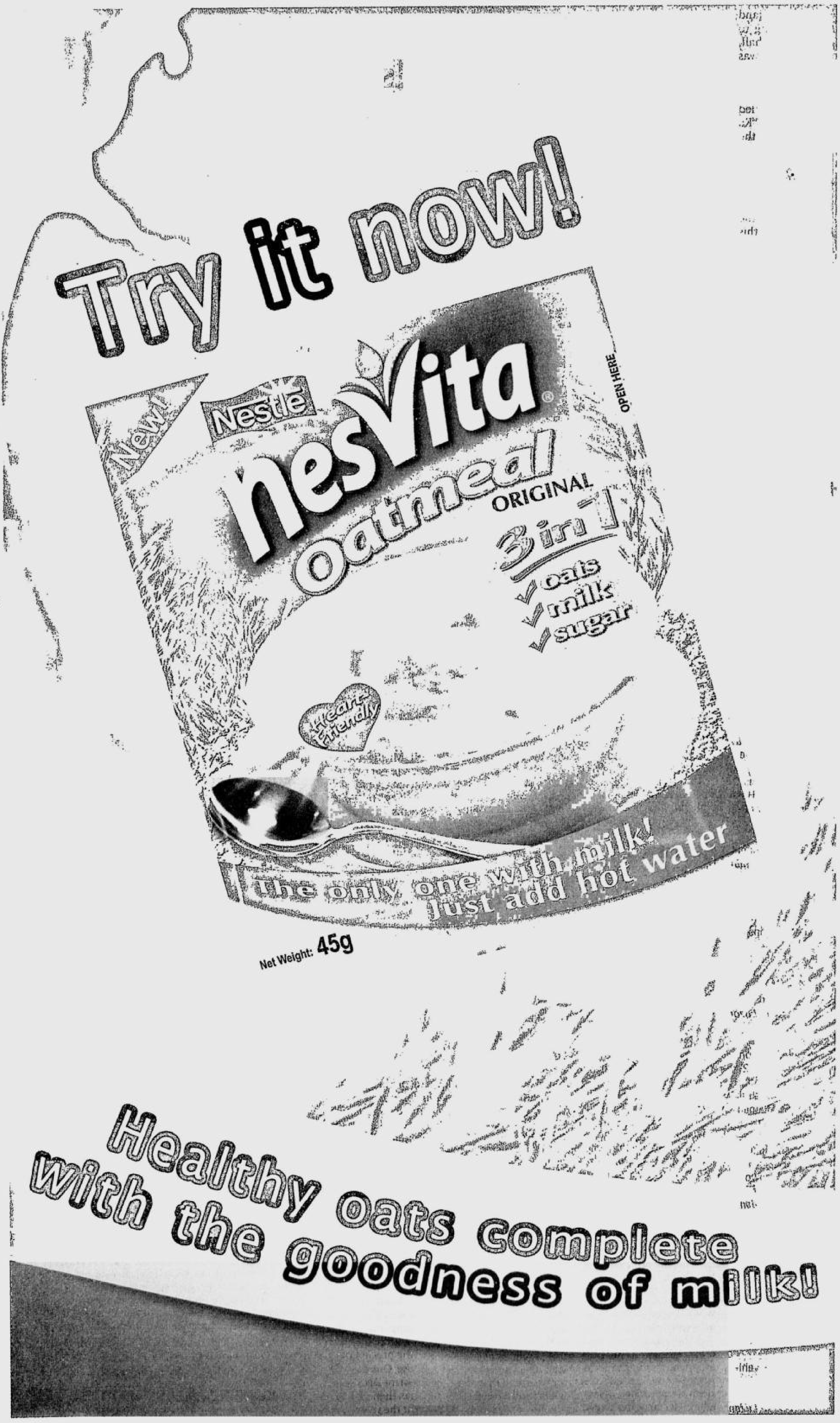

Good guys in jail, bad guys in office

REBELS ARE MADE, NOT BORN. THEY ARE shaped by injustice and oppression, and the final cut is dealt by the denial of their appeal for justice. This is made clear by the American Declaration of Independence which explains why a nation decided to rebel against its government. The Declaration begins with the affirmation that "All men are created equal ... endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

It avowed that "Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn (*sic*) that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security."

The signers of the Declaration asserted that "In every stage of these Oppressions, We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people."

Navy Lt. Antonio Trillanes IV and Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim graduated from the Philippine Military Academy, an honored institution where the ideals of patriotism and conduct becoming an officer and a gentleman are drilled into its students. In particular, Trillanes and his Oakwood comrades followed the path undertaken by the signers of the Declaration by first petitioning for provisions that the soldiers in the battlefields of Mindanao badly needed, among them, good shoes, adequate food rations and quick medical aid in case of injuries. They also exposed and petitioned an end to bombings allegedly perpetrated by military agents.

When their complaint was ignored, they went straight to their commander in chief and there met a stinging rebuff. To whom else would they go, except straight to the sovereign people? Trillanes could have taken the easy path, closed his eyes to the neglect and abuses of the government, and wormed his way up to the top to be rewarded with mansions and high positions. Instead he chose the path that the signers of the Declaration took. His election to the Senate showed that a great number of his fellow citizens did not disapprove of his action.

Now Trillanes and his like-minded comrades are in prison. The good guys are in jail, and the bad guys (in the minds of many) are in office. Former Vice President Teofisto Guingona, a tested fighter against despotism and corruption, and former UP president Francisco Nemenzo, also an uncompromising fighter for justice, are under indictment. What lessons do these teach the young?

—MANUEL F. ALMARIO,
mfalmario@yahoo.com

Eddie Ilarde pushed first for 'Maharlika'

READER JIMMY SEMBRANO ERRED WHEN he said in his letter (INQUIRER, 11/29/07) that it was former First Lady Imelda Marcos who suggested that our country's name be changed to "Maharlika."

For the record, it was former congressman/senator Eddie Ilarde who made that suggestion.

—PAUL R. MORTEL,
MBLA Court, Malanday,
Marikina City 1805

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AFP vows to paralyze NPA in Samar

By Jhunnex Napallacan
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—THE ARMED FORCES OF the Philippines Central Command (Centcom) has vowed to launch early next year an offensive against the New People's Army following a raid that the rebel group conducted on a police station in Samar on Sunday.

About a hundred alleged members of the NPA attacked the police station at the town hall in Hinabangan about 5 a.m. Sunday. A civilian died during the exchange of gunfire that lasted for about an hour.

AFP Centcom spokesperson Lt. Col. Jefferson Omandam said the military would concentrate its operations in Samar by January.

"They are taking advantage of the Christmas holidays. But we could not afford to just let the incident pass. Punitive patrols would go on, and whenever they are there, it may spark an encounter," Omandam said.

Omandam admitted that Samar is the one province in the Visayas where the NPA remains a big problem.

He said the military would focus on paralyzing the NPA operations there.

Omandam said Centcom commanding general Victor Ibrado yesterday issued orders to all the military headquarters in the Visayas to be vigilant.

Omandam said the NPA usually conduct operations during the NPA's founding anniversary on Dec. 26.

The guerrilla group would take advantage of the ongoing suspension of military operations, he pointed out.

Omandam said military or police headquarters, which are lax on security, would be the most likely targets.

Central Visayas police director Chief Supt. Ronald Roderos also issued a memorandum to all city and provincial directors in the region to strengthen their security and to establish an advance command post to provide early warning for any NPA attack.

Roderos said intelligence gathering should also be strengthened to avoid similar incidents from happening.

The PRO 7 police force is on heightened alert status because of the Christmas holidays.

CPP salutes NPA raiders

LUCENA CITY—THE COMmunist Party of the Philippines (CPP) congratulated Monday the New People's Army (NPA) rebels for their successful raid on the Hinabangan Municipal Police Office in Samar province Sunday.

"This tactical offensive shows the determination and capability of the revolutionary forces to defeat the Arroyo regime's counter-revolutionary war of terror and push forward the people's war," CPP spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal said in a statement sent to the INQUIRER.

He claimed that the successful raid added flavor to the people and their revolutionary forces' celebration of the 39th anniversary of the CPP, which falls today.

Rosal said the communist raiders easily overpowered the policemen on guard and overran the station.

Citing initial reports from the rebel forces who conducted the raid, he said the raiders seized one M-16 and one M-14 rifles, hundreds of rounds of ammunition and other weapons.

Rosal said a militiaman was also killed in the firefight.

He identified the man as Pedro Abadiano, who was at the station visiting his policeman-son when the guerrillas struck.

The casualty was reportedly a former member of the Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit.

A report said the communist rebels stalled the arrival of government reinforcements by setting up a blocking force and planting land mines on a route leading to the Hinabangan town hall, where the police office was located.

Braggadocio

The rebels, reportedly led by a "Ka Batig" and "Ka Homer," fled on foot after the attack.

Rosal said the Hinabangan raid "exposes as nothing but braggadocio the AFP's (Armed Forces of the Philippines) claim of wiping out the NPA in Eastern Visayas this year."

On Sunday, the CPP-NPA declared a unilateral ceasefire on Dec. 24-25 and on Dec. 31-Jan. 1.

However, Rosal made it clear the order to intensify tactical offensives against government forces remained in force during the four-day ceasefire. *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon*

ROUNDUP

Cagayan town councilor shot dead

TUGUEGARAO CITY—A councilor in the coastal town of Buguey in Cagayan was shot dead in front of the Catholic church in the town after attending Mass on Christmas Eve, police said.

Cagayan police director Senior Supt. Jude Wilson Santos said Councilor Vicman Mondejar was walking toward his van parked in front of the church at 11:30 p.m. when a man approached and shot him in the head.

Santos said Mondejar's wife and three children were with him during the attack but they were not hurt.

He said the police were looking at politics as a possible motive in the slaying of Mondejar, who placed eighth in the council election in the town on May 14. ***Villamor Visaya Jr., Inquirer Northern Luzon***

Girl killed by stray bullet

CEBU CITY—A 16-year-old girl in Mandaue City was hit by stray bullet on Christmas Eve, while 16 persons, most of them residents of Cebu, were injured from firecracker blasts.

Shaony Ann Marianito of Looc, Mandaue City was walking towards her home when she suddenly fell to the ground at 9:30 p.m. on Monday.

PO2 Gladstone Riconalla of the Mandaue City Police Office said the police had yet to determine what kind of bullet hit Marianito's left cheek. She was brought to the Mandaue City District Hospital but later transferred to Don Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center (DVSMMC). Hospital spokesperson Nonoy Mongaya said Marianito was still under observation at the emergency room of DVSMMC.

The Regional Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit (RESU) has recorded 16 victims of firecracker blasts, according to RESU personnel Noel Gayo, much very much lower than last year's figure. ***Joey A. Gabieta, Carla P. Gomez and Jhunnex Napallacan, Inquirer Visayas***

Marijuana plants uprooted

CAMP DANGWA, Benguet—Police on Monday uprooted more than 16,000 marijuana plants, worth at least P3.24 million, in plantations in Kapangan town.

Reports from the Cordillera police said policemen and agents of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency raided the plantations in Sitio Alawin and Sitio Tayakpa in Barangay Sagubo at 8 a.m.

No suspect or plantation caretaker was arrested during the raid.
Inquirer Northern Luzon

2 suspected rebels slain

COTABATO CITY—Two suspected communist guerillas were killed on the day the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) rejected the 22-day holiday truce offered by the government.

Supt. Teng Tocao, Sultan Kudarat provincial police director, said a militiaman was also wounded in the 30-minute firefight between militiamen and New People's Army (NPA) rebels in Columbio town on Dec. 17.

Tocao said the militiamen were conducting foot patrol when they chanced upon the undetermined number of rebels near the boundary with Tulunan, North Cotabato around 5 p.m.

Tocao said the rebels left behind their two dead comrades and two weapons as they fled towards the forested portion of Davao del Sur.
Edwin O. Fernandez, Inquirer Mindanao

2 dead, 3 hurt in road mishap

LUCENA CITY—Two persons died and three others injured when an Asian Utility Vehicle (AUV)-type jeep collided with a bus traveling along Quirino Highway in Tagkawayan, Quezon Monday afternoon.

Insp. Geminiano Dañes, Tagkawayan Municipal Police Office chief, identified the victims as Erwin Ramos, 27, driver of the AUV vehicle, and Erlinda Realino, 54, both residents of Taytay, Rizal.

A report said that at about 4 p.m., a PP Bus Line driven by one Reynaldo Paña was traveling in Barangay San Francisco when it collided head-on with the approaching AUV.

The victims died on the spot. Two other passengers of the AUV vehicle suffered serious injuries and were rushed to the nearest hospital where they were still recuperating.
Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon

Baguio's street kids ask: Is Santa for real?

SANTA CLAUS brings toys to children at the Baguio General Hospital, which is taking care of 66 ill children. VINCENT CABREZA

BAGUIO CITY—STREET CHILDREN HERE spent Christmas Eve trying to sell gift wrappers and gift bags along downtown Baguio.

On Christmas morning, they tried to sell their remaining pieces to Santa Claus himself.

"Santa" is former Councilor Narciso Padilla, who has spent Christmas mornings giving out candies along downtown Baguio since the 1970s.

He gently reminded the children he attracted—many of them children of Maranao folk who migrated to Baguio—that gifts have already been opened on Christmas Day, so no one will buy their products.

But it led a Maranao child into asking: "Is Santa for real?"

Padilla ended up explaining Santa Claus' role in the Christmas celebration as other Muslim children began to crowd around him.

Their presence there was a sign that Christmas, while a Christian tradition, does belong to all children, Padilla later told the INQUIRER.

It was the first time he engaged Muslims in a discussion about the legend of Santa Claus or Saint Nicholas.

Muslim children

Some Muslim families here often discourage their children's interest in Santa Claus because of the icon's Christian symbolism, said a Maranao businesswoman.

She points to the website www.islamworld.net which discusses Santa in a chapter called "The Muslim Survival Guide to Christmas."

It said: "Santa Claus (a German translation of St. Nicholas) was modeled after [St. Nicholas, bishop of Myra 17,000 years ago] a man of kindness, generosity and compassion. It was only in the last few hundred years that Santa Claus was associated with the Christian holiday of Christmas that celebrates the birthday of Prophet Jesus."

The Maranao children, however, told Padilla they believed there is a real Santa because everyone believes he exists.

"Isn't Santa real because everyone believes he is real? All the gift wrappers we are selling bear your features," a Maranao boy said.

They said Padilla should buy all of their wrappers as his keepsake.

Padilla laughed at the children's logic.

"There are lots of Santas. There are also Santas in other countries. I am the Santa of [Baguio]," he said.

The Maranao children did not leave Padilla's side as he walked along Session Road to meet families leaving the Baguio cathedral after attending Christmas Mass.

"It's hard not to see the relevance of this occasion. If Muslims are [enchanted] by Santa, then the concept of charity prevails among the next generation. Santa stands for unity anyway," he said.

Padilla runs the annual "Silahis ng Pasko" project in the city, and the dwindling volume of Yuletide donors suggests that charity is no longer a priority for others, he said.

"I don't blame them. [Earning] money has become hard even for big companies. Texas Instruments still finances Silahis ng Pasko projects for children [with disability], but many of my traditional donors have no more to spare," Padilla said.

Padilla later visited a sales clerk, Josephine Gasat, who gave birth to her "Christmas baby," Jesper Vincent, at the Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center.

He brought stuffed toys and candy to 66 children confined at the hospital.

Some of the children had been crying all night, a nurse said. But they brightened up when Padilla showed up.

"If many people say [playing Santa] is a thankless job, let them come with me to see these children, and they'll know how wonderful it truly is," he said. *Vincent Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

Christmas traditions alive in Pampanga town

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

MABALACAT, PAMPANGA—A SEA OF light, bursting brightly from 224 lanterns hoisted on poles, swamped the church grounds here on Christmas Eve as Catholics in 14 of this town's 27 villages kept alive the traditions of the *lubenas* (lantern processions) and the *maitinis* (convergence of lubenas).

Like in the dying art of the *pastorella* or Latin hymns that are still sung here during the nine-day Christmas Masses, 72-year-old Paulina Concepcion could not tell the origins of the two practices.

"We grew up witnessing it," Concepcion told the INQUIRER as she waited for the arrival of the *lubenas*.

As how it has been done here for decades, she said *lubenas*, a corruption of the word novena, is a procession held in honor of the village's patron saint.

That procession, she said, is incomplete when the *malasanto* (image of saints) is not accompanied by a set of 16 lanterns.

The lanterns are arranged this way: A cross-shaped one heads the set. Behind it are two candle-shaped pieces. Then two rows of star-shaped lanterns, six on each side, accompany the image, which is either on *andas* (shoulder-borne carriage) or on a *carroza* (wheeled carriage). Behind the carriage is a star-shaped lantern that is bigger than the rest.

A choir singing the "Dios te Salve" accompanies the faithful as they go on foot around the community. Its Latin lyrics are prescribed by the parish's liturgy committee.

"The text of the song should be strictly followed ... because the meaning and its essence will be useless," the committee advised in a set of rules it issued for the event.

"It used to be that the lanterns were lighted only by candles or gas lamps," Concepcion said.

Convergence

After World War II, the lanterns have been lit up either by a car battery or a generator set, she said.

The villages that continue with the practices are Dolores, Cacutud, Atlu-Bola, Mangalit, Sta. Ines, Agusu, Sta. Maria, San Francisco, Sta. Maria Homesite, Sto. Rosario, San Joaquin, Mamatitang, Poblacion and Lourdes. These are located around the church compound.

Confined within the villages from Dec. 16 to 23, all the processions converge at the grounds of the Our Lady of Divine Grace Parish at 8 p.m. of Dec. 24.

The lubenas then go around the processional route at the town proper.

They all head back to the church an hour later for the Misang Maitinez (Christmas midnight Mass), in which a full repertoire of the pastorella, which include the "Credo," is sung not by one but three chorales of 50 singers.

Thus the climax is called "maitinez," "maytinis" or "maitinis." It might have been derived from the word "matin" or dawn prayers.

"Maitinis is the culmination of the nine-day lubenas. The two go together," said Robby Tantingco, a resident of Mabalacat and executive director of the Holy Angel University's Center for Kapampangan Studies.

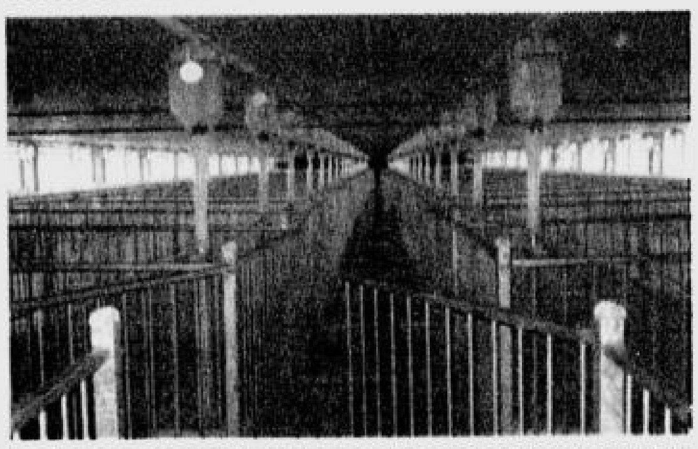
Lubenas and maitinis are known to be also done in Magalang, Angeles City, San Fernando and Mexico in Pampanga and in Concepcion, Tarlac.

That night in Mabalacat might well be a lantern festival of sorts, but not of the scale done in the City of San Fernando, in Pampanga's southern part, where the lanterns are 18 feet in diameter and fitted with 3,000 to 6,000 bulbs.

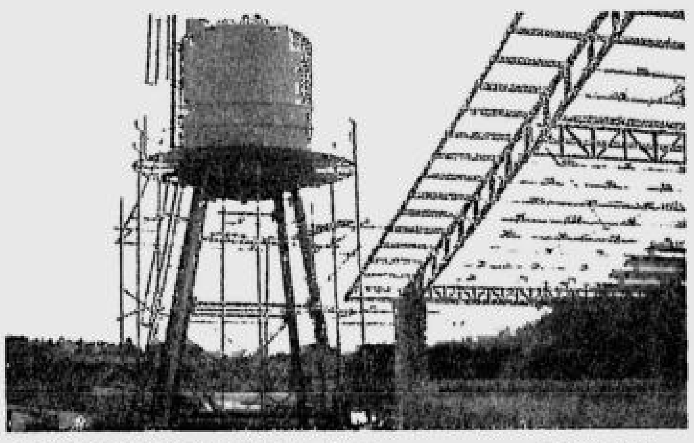
What Mabalaqueños held that night were lanterns that were twice the size of a regular washbasin. These were either made of plastic sheets, capiz (seashells) and Japanese paper. Some broke off from the star design, using advent wreaths as motif instead. None of them had tails, which lanterns in Angeles City have.

SMC's SUMILAO PROPERTY IS A DEVELOPED AGRO-INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, NOT RAW FARM LAND, OPERATIONAL BY JANUARY 2008

GROWING HOUSE, 1,706 HEAD CAPACITY, WITH CLIMATE CONTROL SYSTEM



BOAR HOUSE WITH LABORATORY AND CLIMATE CONTROL SYSTEM



WATER SUPPLY OF 2,000 CUBIC METERS PER DAY

BREEDING BARN, CONSTRUCTION IN PROGRESS

CONCRETE WASTEWATER CANAL; ENVIRONMENTAL FRIENDLY WASTE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

San Miguel Foods, Inc.'s (SMFI) P2.4 billion agro-industrial estate will create thousands of jobs not only in Sumilao but the entire Bukidnon Province.

- The project will generate employment for 2,400 workers and the facility will require 400 employees with an annual payroll of approximately P50 million;
- By partnering with SMFI, the farmers of Bukidnon will have access to farm inputs, financing and technology which will improve farm productivity and guarantee better farm-gate pricing;
- Local government tax revenues will increase 30-fold when the project is fully operational. From P3 million in annual tax collection, SMFI will pay P98 million annually in taxes, allowing government to improve the delivery of education, health, housing and other basic services.

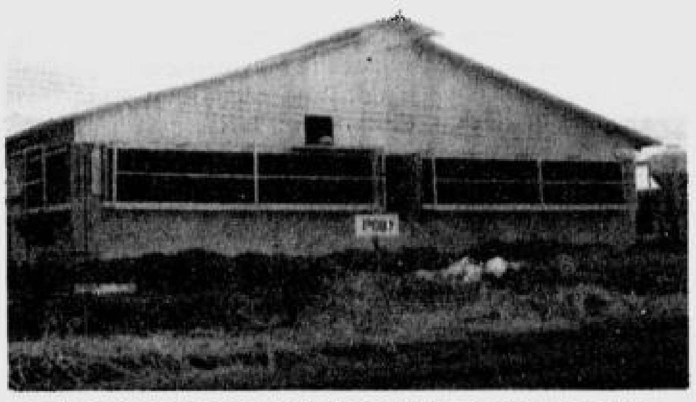
As the current owners of the Sumilao property, we question the legal standing of the protesting farmers.

- A number of the farmers are already Agrarian Reform beneficiaries, having received at least 66 hectares of neighboring land. This nullifies their eligibility to lay further claim to the Sumilao property.
- In fact, the Supreme Court in 1998 noted the absence of tenants on the property, which means none of the farmers have any tenancy rights.

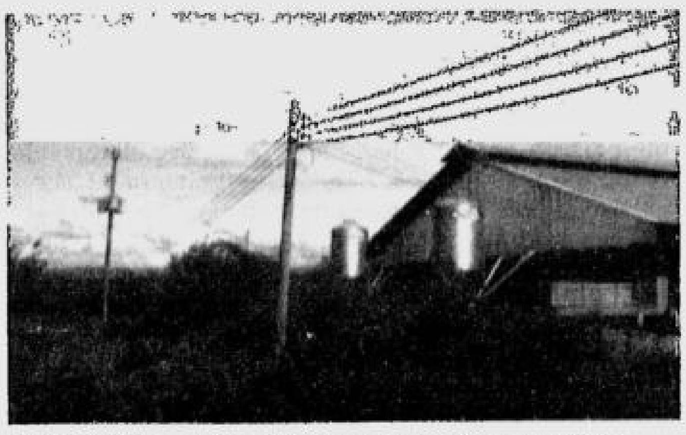
Bukidnon has thousands of hectares of idle Government land in the neighboring area that can be distributed to the farmers. Why jeopardize this major rural development project that is very nearly operational and stands to bring immeasurable benefit and progress to the people of Bukidnon?

We trust in the fairness of the public to see the facts for what they are.

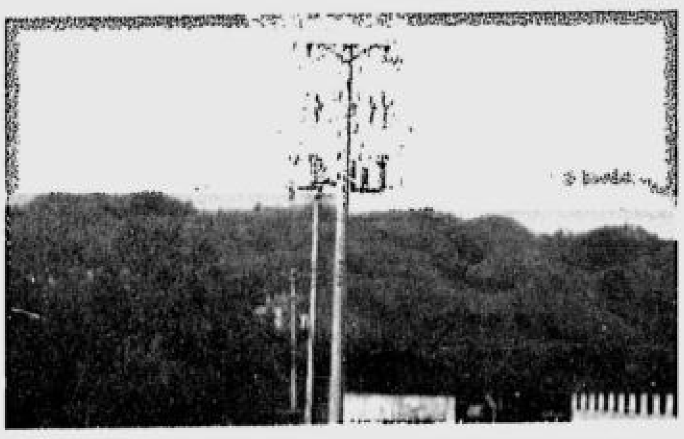
SAN MIGUEL FOODS, INC.



GESTATION BARN WITH CONTROLLED-CLIMATE AND AUTOMATIC FEED DELIVERY SYSTEM



FEED SILOS SUPPORT THE AUTOMATIC FEED SYSTEM



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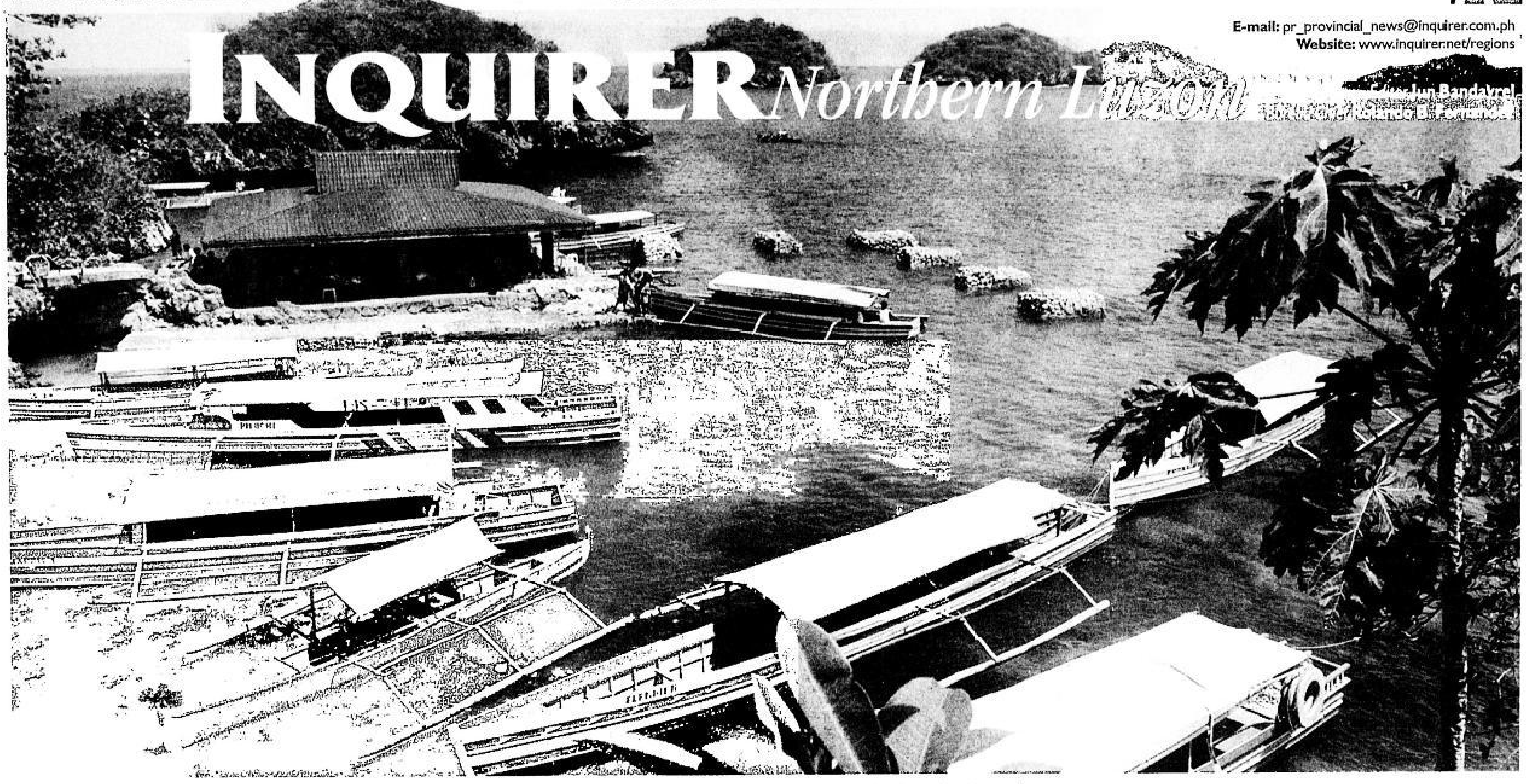


BOATS await passengers at Quezon Island, one of the most popular destinations at the Hundred Islands National Park in Alaminos City, Pangasinan.

PHOTOS BY RAY ZAMBRANO

Interconnected Hundred Islands seen

By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes
Alaminos City

TO ATTRACT MORE TOURISTS to the Hundred Islands National Park (HINP), the city government of Alaminos in Pangasinan has decided to embark on an ambitious project to link these islets on the Lingayen Gulf through a network of transparent underwater tubes.

'It is a grandiose plan. But it is a highly feasible [project] and is actually a part of the comprehensive development master plan of the city'

Visitors can walk through these underwater "bridges" to view various species of fish, corals and marine creatures in their natural environment.

The "bridges" are part of the Hundred Islands Underwater Marine Park project that envisions the establishment in the area of fish sanctuaries, snorkeling and diving areas, a facility for water sports, and a marine institute where experts can study the biological diversity of the Lingayen Gulf.

"It is a grandiose plan. But it is a highly feasible [project] and is actually a part of the comprehensive development master plan of the city," says Mayor Hernani Braganza.

The plan, prepared by the Palafox Associates, an internationally recognized firm engaged in architectural design, urban planning and consultancy, involves a development blueprint for Alaminos as a major player in the socioeconomic and tourism growth of Pangasinan and the Ilocos.

"The plans are ready. What we just need are investors," Braganza says.

He admits that the city's plans for the HINP are "big" but the effort and possible investments that would go to it would be worth every sweat and centavo as the park is the country's first national park and the top tourist attraction of Alaminos and Pangasinan.

Even in its "untouched" stage, the park already draws about 100,000 visitors yearly, Braganza says.

THE WATERS around the Hundred Islands attract snorkelers and divers.

The park offers tourists white beaches, dive spots, caves and bird sanctuaries.

"A wide variety of fish abounds in the waters. They have multiplied fast after we put a stop to illegal fishing activities there," Braganza says.

The coral beds, strained from destructive fishing, are recovering, too. The University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute maintains a giant clam (*Tridacna gigas*, locally known as *taklobo*) farm in the area. This also serves as nesting ground for various species of fish.

The city cannot actually introduce heavy development in the islands because under the National Integrated Protected Areas (Nipas) Act, the city has to protect and conserve this natural spot, says Roel Añonuevo, city planning officer.

The master plan groups the islands into three categories: The "exclusive islands," intended for those who want to have privacy and try scuba diving and snorkeling; the "exploration islands," for tourists who are into adventure and extreme sports such as rappelling, parasailing, kayaking and trekking; and the "everyday islands," for families and groups who want to go swimming, snorkeling, trekking, and bird and bat watching.

"The underwater bridges project is the ultimate [goal]. It will justify all the other infrastructure requirements of the area such as the airport, a seaport, a highway, shopping malls and others. It will jumpstart the city's development," Braganza says.

The city's master plan does not revolve only on the HINP, but on the entire city based on its geographical characteristics and investment potentials.

With this, the city would be divided into five clusters, Braganza says.

While development for the Hundred Islands (Cluster 1) is minimal, the proposed development for Cluster 2, which includes the Bolo Beach, is bigger.

The proposed projects there include resort and hotel development, ecotourism, forest hillside development, health and spa, view decks, mangrove forest, golf course and an equestrian village.

The horseshoe shaped Bolo Beach, with its shallow waters, offers a perfect getaway for vacationers and is actually an alternative to the Lucap wharf as a jump-off point to the islands.

The master plan's Cluster 3 is called the "Heritage Walk Zone," which offers a tour of the "Old Town"—the church, town plaza, ancestral houses, museums, the Balay-a-Daan, salt farms and rivers. Cluster 4 is the "countryside farming zone" while Cluster 5 is the "business park zone."

"The master plan is designed to make Alaminos a 'green city' … Investors, big and small, are welcome to do business in the city," says Braganza, who sponsored his native town's cityhood bid when he represented Pangasinan's first district in the House of Representatives in 2001.

But he says only light industries, tourist-related facilities and those that draw strength from the rich agriculture and fishery resources of the city are welcome.

While tourism is the primary focus of the master plan, its other goals include a fully developed agriculture, adequate and highly modernized physical infrastructure and facilities, availability of modern education, accessible health facilities, well protected and rehabilitated coastal resources and assured public safety and peace and order.

All it takes for Alaminos' master plan to take off is an international airport, Braganza says.

The entire western Pangasinan, which has potential tourism and commercial areas, will benefit once an airport is built there, he adds.

Braganza says while Alaminos is accessible by land transportation, travel time from the different airports like the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Metro Manila), Diosdado Macapagal International Airport (Pampanga) and the San Fernando City Airport (La Union) is "quite long and tiring."

"Who wants to travel for three to six hours by land to get to the islands? With an airport, tourists from other countries can fly direct to the city," he says.

Braganza welcomes President Macapagal-Arroyo's endorsement of a commercial airport project in her State of the Nation Address in July.

"This has been a long dream of Alaminos and Pangasinan that will soon become a reality. It will make the province accessible to businessmen and tourists, and hopefully, it can accommodate cargo planes for Pangasinan to export its agricultural resources," he says.

Living, working with the Aeta

By Tonette Orejas
Porac, Pampanga

TO CONTINUE LIVing and working with the Aeta in Porac, Pampanga, is the gift Fr. Regnel "Ching" Fuertez is giving to himself this Christmas.

It is in the mountain ranges of Porac and with some 2,000 indigenous people that he has "grown in faith with" in the last two years since May 2004, said the 43-year-old former draftsman whose calling to the priestly vocation came late in life.

"I like it here. It is my third Christmas here. The people teach me that while they live simple lives, they still try to be happy," said Fuertez, the only priest in the Archdiocese of San Fernando who is assigned to the province's Aeta communities.

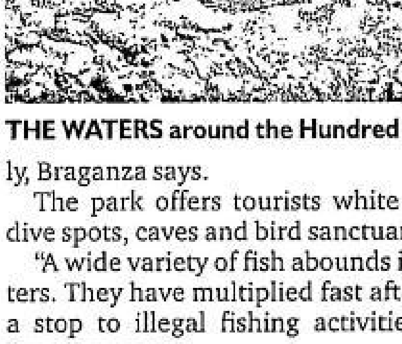
His mission is based at the Villa Maria resettlement (Sitio Alalangad to Aeta), about 20 km west of Mt. Pinatubo. The archdiocese's Social Action Center of Pampanga helps him out in nearby Sapang Uwak. (Another Kapampangan priest, Fr. Henry Gueco, works with the Aeta in Bataan's Mt. Malasimbu.)

"They show their faith through work and through family life," he said during a break in the rehearsal of the choir of young Aeta last week.

At the chapel two hours later, the children, accompanied by Fuertez on the guitar, sang their best at the Mass celebrated by Archbishop Paciano Aniceto.

Like in past Christmas Masses, this one was followed by a party that Aniceto has not failed to give in the last 15 years. The community shared lunch of *pusung saging*, *torta*, *tilapia*, banana and papaya.

The lanky, perennially smiling priest seemed to have earned the trust of the Aeta who do not easily befriend strangers. The elders kissed his hand. The young ones sidled up to him, at times hanging on to his legs. Older women gave him baskets of banana and papaya grown in their *gasak* (mountain plots).



FR. REGNEL "Ching" Fuertez has chosen to live and work with the Aeta. TONETTE OREJAS

And he's keen at what they like. At the end of the Mass, he sang a folk version of "Sometimes When We Touch," a hit in the 1980s. A folk singer in Guagua town gave that a Kapampangan refrain.

The local version is known around here as "O Jo, Kaluguran da ka (O Jo, I love you)." Playing to a delightful audience, Fuertez earned loud applause.

In preaching, he said he respects their regard for Apo Namalyari, not putting that deity in conflict with Catholic beliefs.

Calling

How he got here is both by force of circumstance and calling. Msgr. Felipe Pangilinan, 84, and working here for almost 20 years, suffered a stroke and Fuertez had to take over.

Months before that though, he said the "small voice" that had been guiding him in periods of discernment, told him to head for the "mountains."

"So here I was," he said.

Porac, his third assignment after being a university chaplain and parish priest of the barangay island of Malusac in Sasmuan town, was by far regarded as a difficult mission.

It was because the Aeta there confronted land and mining issues, lived within ancestral domains where government troops and communist rebels clashed, and dealt with unscrupulous traders.

Like the winding road to Villa Maria, his route to the priesthood was even more complicated.

"I failed twice in the civil engineering board exam although I exerted so much effort to pass it. Then I went to the United States as an immigrant, worked as a draftsman there (from 1988 to 1992). While playing basketball [in California], I suffered a sprain in the leg. That's when I found myself reading the Bible," Fuertez said.

Sad turns

In all these sad turns, he said: "God must have another plan for me."

He decided to return to the Philippines in late 1992, giving up his green card to the US Embassy.

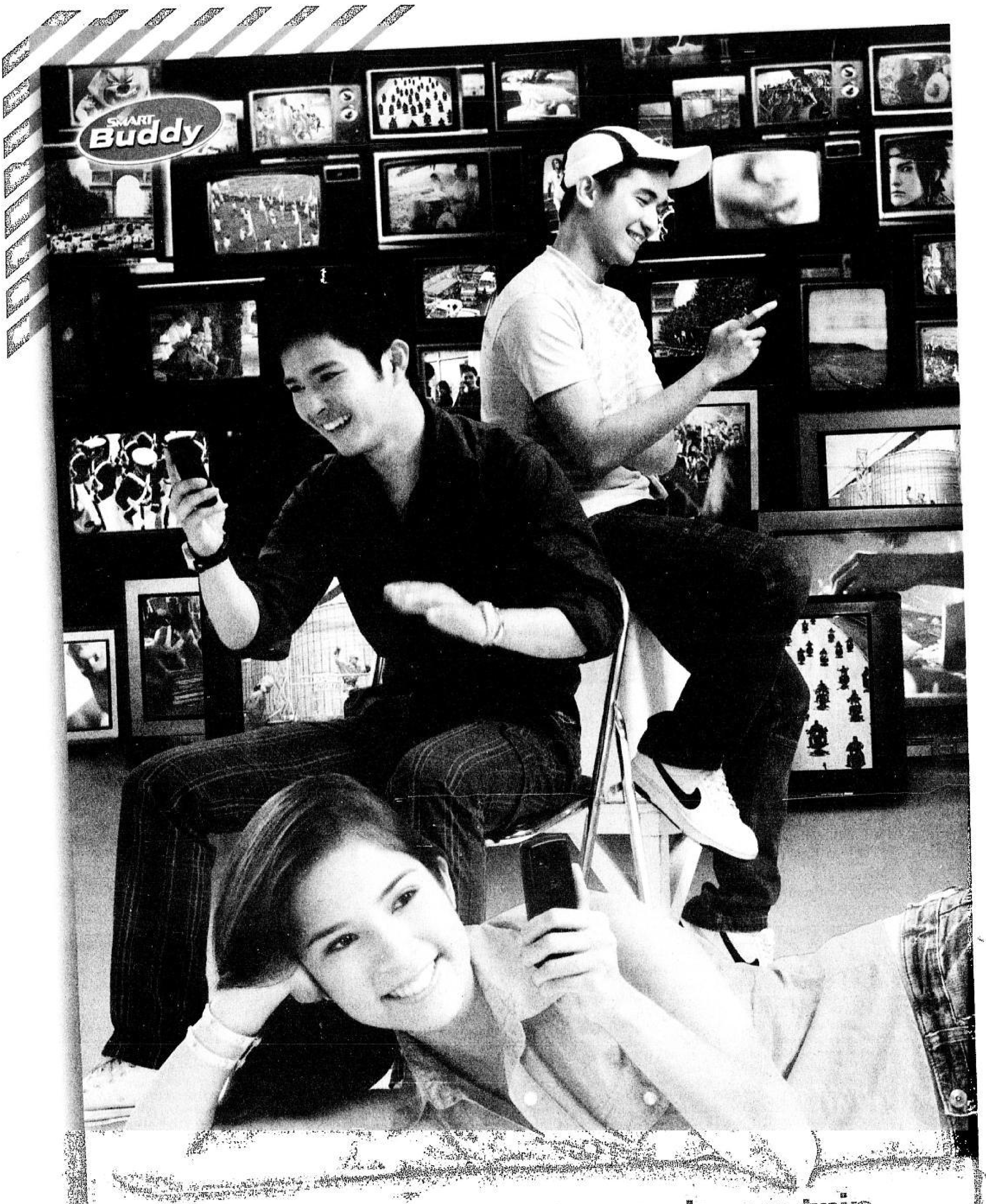
"I was laughing at myself as I surrendered the green card," he said, thinking himself to be a fool because the queue for visa applicants that day was, as usual, long.

On the suggestion of a classmate who went on to become a priest, he retreated to Guimaras Island to discern for the vocation. Getting no signs, he tried to find it by living with a Muslim and Catholic couple in Macabebe, Pampanga.

It was while with the Sumascan missionaries in Lubao, Pampanga, that he first heard the "small voice" tell him to embrace priesthood.

At the Holy Apostles Seminary, his batch of 60 aspirants dwindled to 30, then to 18, then to 14 and finally, six. Fuertez was among the few who made it.

Finding the priesthood, remaining faithful to it, staying on with the Aeta and helping in their life's struggles are, he said, "graces of God."



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Inventor wins suit vs firm

Ayala Land subsidiary told to pay ₱90M in damages

By Margaux C. Ortiz

A QUEZON CITY JUDGE HAS ORDERED A SUBSIDIARY of real estate developer Ayala Land Inc. to pay an inventor more than P90 million in damages for using his patent for a modular housing system without his consent.

In his decision dated Dec. 18, Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 90 Judge Reynaldo Daway said the acts of Avida Land Corp. were an infringement of Edgardo Vazquez's patent invention.

Vazquez is the president and chief executive officer of Vazquez Building Systems Corp. and former president of the Filipino Inventor's Society.

INVENTOR/A18

HAPPINESS IS ...
Two children come out of their godparent's house in Las Piñas City with big smiles after receiving gifts on Christmas Day. ERIK ARAZAS

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SMART
THE POWER TO LEAD

MMDA reminds Metro residents: Mind your garbage

By DJ Yap

THIS BEING THE SEASON FOR indulgences, the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority has only one reminder for the public: Mind your garbage.

In a period where the amount of trash traditionally doubles, residents in the metropolis were reminded to properly dispose of their waste.

MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando said the volume of garbage generated by Metro Manila's 10 million residents usually doubles in December, especially during the Yule holidays.

From a total of 3,000 to 4,000 tons on regular months, the figure rises to between 5,000 and 7,000 tons during the Christmas season, he added.

Of the total, only about 80 percent is collected properly while the rest ends up being dumped in canals and other waterways, the MMDA chair said.

Fernando, meanwhile, appealed to city dwellers to follow the MMDA's "door-to-door" garbage collection policy.

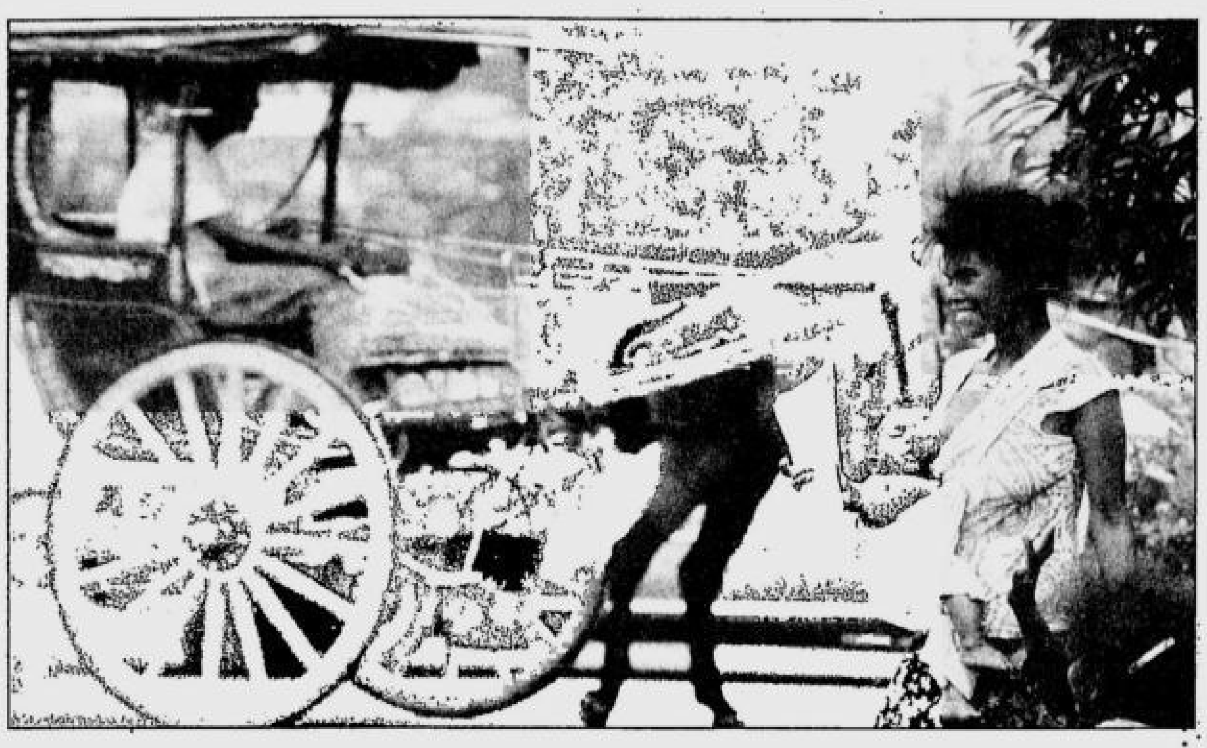
"Metro Manila residents should do their part by not throwing their garbage outside their homes before the dump trucks pass by to collect the garbage," he said.

At the same time, he warned residents living near waterways not to dump their waste lest they be caught and penalized.

Fernando assured Metro Manila residents that regular garbage collection would continue even during the holidays, saying he has already secured a commitment from local officials and garbage haulers.

He added that he has also talked with officials of Rizal province and Navotas who assured him that they would continue to allow Metro Manila to use their sanitary landfills.

One-third of the garbage generated by residents in the metropolis is thrown into the landfill in Rodriguez, Rizal. Some go to the Payatas dump in Quezon City and other landfills in the metropolis and nearby areas.



LONG WAY FROM HOME An Aeta woman and her baby, visitors to the city, wait for alms from passersby on T. M. Kalaw Street in Manila.

RYAN LIM

Man gets 14 years for robbing security agency

By Julie M. Aurelio

A PASAY CITY JUDGE HAS sentenced a man to a maximum of 14 years in prison for robbing a security agency of 35 Armalite rifles, two revolvers and 15 shotguns on New Year's Eve in 2005.

Raymond Bongabong, a taxi driver, was also ordered to pay the Davao Security and Investigation Agency almost P3 million in damages.

In his 11-page decision, Judge Pedro Corales of the Pasay City Regional Trial Court Branch 118 set aside Bongabong's denial and alibi and instead gave weight to the testimony of two witnesses.

Court records showed that on Dec. 31, 2005, Bongabong and nine other armed men pretended to be policemen and forced their way into the security agency located on Park Avenue in Pasay City.

They then tied up security guards Edwin Ulan-Ulan and Adelio Pimentel at the establishment's parking area and seized the keys to the storage vault.

Pimentel and Ulan-Ulan later positively identified Bongabong in court as one of the nine men who robbed the security agency.

"There was no question that they recognized Bongabong's face because the area where they (witnesses) were brought was illuminated by light," Corales pointed out in his decision.

The robbers were able to cart away 35 Armalite cal. 5.56 rifles; two cal. .38 revolvers, 15 shotguns and 3,350 rounds of ammunition.

Holdup victims file complaint vs restaurant owner

By Jeannette I. Andrade

IRKED CUSTOMERS OF A RESTaurant in Quezon City which was robbed on Christmas Eve accused the establishment's owner of negligence yesterday.

One of those who filed a complaint at the police security office in Barangay Lourdes—the area where the restaurant is located—was businessman Carmen Chong.

Chong said she lost P500,000 worth of cash and jewelry to the six suspects who barged into the Chinatown's Best Food Restaurant in Sta. Mesa Heights, Quezon City, on Dec. 24.

The robbers emptied the cash register and then forced around 15 customers to hand over their valuables to them.

In her complaint, Chong criticized the restaurant for its lax security measures.

Brian Bohol, a staff of the barangay police security office, told the INQUIRER that Chong and five other customers who claimed to had been robbed said that the restaurant owner, Rainier Hernandez, did not handle the situation well.

Chong, Bohol added, also complained that at the time of the robbery, none of the restaurant's close-circuit security cameras was working.

Quezon City Police District chief Senior Supt. Magtanggol Gatdula, meanwhile, told the INQUIRER that investigators have yet to identify the group behind the heist.

"None of the customers and employees was able to get a clear view of the suspects who were wearing motorcycle helmets," he said.

Inventor wins suit . . .

From page A17

He sued the Ayala Land subsidiary for infringement on Dec. 10, 1999 after the firm allegedly copied the process of assembling an exterior wall structure of a modular housing unit, which the petitioner said he invented in 1994.

Vazquez demanded that Avida pay him P300 million in damages for allegedly copying the Vazquez columns—characterized by H-shaped sections and wall panels—and using them in its housing projects, particularly in the Sta. Isabel Village in Lucena City.

Avida, however, denied his accusations, arguing that it had used the modular building system of Tex Holdings Plc., a British firm, and Swiss builder Maison Individuelles SA.

In his decision, Daway said that Avida's columns and concrete wall panels used in its housing projects in Tayabas, Quezon; Naga City; Sto. Tomas, Batangas; Trece Martirez, Cavite and Cebu City were "substantially similar or identical in appearance and construction" to Vazquez's invention.

Daway further noted that the differences or dissimilarities in the design pointed out by the defendant "can hardly be noticed."

He then ordered Avida to pay Vazquez more than P90 million as "temperate damages or reasonable royalty with interest of six percent per annum from the time the infringement case was filed."

Daway also directed the defendant to immediately stop using the Vazbuilt technology in its housing projects.

The INQUIRER tried to call officials of Avida Land Corp. but they could not be reached for comment.

METROBRIEFS

Salon loses more than P500,000 to robbers

MORE than P500,000 worth of expensive hair products were stolen from a salon in Tondo, Manila a day before Christmas. Investigator SPO4 Norman Cristobal of the Manila Police District Station 2 said that the robbery at the Tutuban branch of David's Salon was discovered by inventory controller Carmen Escasa when she came in at around 9:30 a.m. One of their cabinets, Escasa told the police, had been forced open and its contents missing. The cabinet contained 150 shampoo bottles worth P200,250; 120 hair treatment products worth P216,000; a box of straightening cream worth P37,500; 50 tubes of hair color, P23,500; 50 tubes of coloring products, P18,750; hair extension pieces, P35,000; and P3,000 in cash. Cristobal said they were looking into the possibility that the theft was an inside job since there were no signs of forced entry.

Allison W. Lopez

Thieves steal 'puto,' 'lechon' on Christmas Eve

EVEN robbers need to celebrate Christmas. Two robberies were reported in Pasig City on Christmas Eve, where the suspects not only took cash and valuables from their victims, they also carted away *noche buena* specialties. Three unidentified men held up a Goldilocks store on F. Legaspi Street, Barangay Maybunga, Pasig City just before closing time on Monday night. According to a report from the Pasig City police, the three armed suspects barged inside the store at around 9 p.m. and divested the store employees of their cash and personal belongings. The store's cashier, Lorna Bareso, 24, said the robbers took the store's earnings for the day worth P13,000. The suspects also robbed the employees of their cellular phones and necklaces, all totaling over P5,000. Before the suspects sped away, they also took with them a large box of *puto*, a type of rice cake considered to be one of the store's specialties, the report said. In a separate incident, investigators were looking for the driver of a taxi cab who ran away with a *lechon* (roasted pig) that was supposed to be delivered to a house in Quezon City on Monday night. According to complainant Jeffrey Bumatay, 19, a waiter of a restaurant at The Fort Global City in Taguig City, he flagged down the taxi cab with plate number TVT 500 in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City at around 9 p.m. He asked the driver to take him to a residence in Green Meadows, Quezon City to deliver the *lechon*. Bumatay said the driver did not know the area so when they arrived near Valle Verde subdivision in Pasig City, he asked the driver to stop so he could get directions from the village security guard. When he got out of the cab, Bumatay said the taxi driver immediately sped away, taking with him the *lechon* worth about P4,000. Bumatay said he and his boss are prepared to file charges against the taxi driver.

Kristine L. Alave

Milagros Postigo-Balaguer; 50

MILAGROS Postigo-Balaguer, a native of Ocine, Tigaon, Camarines Sur and a resident of Sucat, Muntinlupa City, passed away on Dec. 21 after battling cancer for over a year. Her body lies at the Eastern Funeral parlor on the East Service Road in Alabang, Muntinlupa. Balaguer, 50, will be laid to rest at 2 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 28, at the Aglipay Cemetery in Soldier's Hill, Muntinlupa City. She is survived by her husband, Jun, and children Sofia, Joana, Ryan and Richard.

DID YOU KNOW

TO AVOID further destruction and loss of civilian lives due to Japanese attacks, American Gen. Douglas MacArthur declared Manila an open city (meaning it no longer had military forces) on Dec. 26, 1941. MacArthur hoped the Japanese would stop bombing the city because it no longer had military value. The Japanese, however, continued attacking Manila, destroying buildings like the Treasury Building.

American historian William Manchester later said, "The destruction of Manila was one of the greatest tragedies of World War II. Of all the allied capitals, only Warsaw (Poland) suffered more."

Cyril L. Bonabente, Inquirer Research

Republic of the Philippines
ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
San Miguel Avenue, Pasig City

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION FOR AUTHORITY TO RECOVER COSTS FOR THE POWER PURCHASE AGREEMENT OF THE CALIRAYA - BOTOCAN - KALAYAAN (CBK) BUILD - REHABILITATE - OPERATE - TRANSFER (BROT) POWER PROJECT, WITH PRAYER FOR PROVISIONAL AUTHORITY

ERC CASE NO. 2007-159 RC

NATIONAL POWER CORPORATION (NPC),
Applicant.

x-------------------------------------x

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES:

Notice is hereby given that on November 19, 2007, the National Power Corporation (NPC) filed an application for the Commission's approval of its authority to recover costs for the Power Purchase Agreement of the Caliraya - Botocan - Kalayaan (CBK) Build - Rehabilitate - Operate - Transfer, with prayer for provisional authority.

In said application, NPC alleged, among other things, that:

1. Pursuant to its Charter and in the furtherance of the policies set forth under Executive Order No. 215 allowing private sector participation in power generation and in the implementation of Republic Act No. 7648 or the Electric Power Crisis Act of 1993, it has contracted and entered into a Build, Rehabilitate Operate and Transfer (BROT) Agreement on November 6, 1998 and its Supplemental Agreements dated September 14, 1999 and May 22, 2003, respectively, with the Industrial Metallugicas Percamona S.A. (IMPSA) of Argentina/CBK Power Co. Ltd., for the purchase and supply of electric power in accordance with Republic Act No. 6957 (otherwise known as "BOT Law"), as amended by Republic Act No. 7718 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations, involving the 792MW CBK hydro Power Plant Project consisting of the following plants/generating units:

Plant Capacity/Type			
a	Kalayaan Pumped-Storage Power Plant Unit 1	:	168 MW
b	Kalayaan Pumped-Storage Power Plant Unit 2	:	168 MW
c	Kalayaan Pumped-Storage Power Plant Unit 3	:	174.3 MW
d	Kalayaan Pumped-Storage Power Plant Unit 4	:	174.3 MW
e	Caliraya HEPP Unit 1	:	11.3 MW
f	Caliraya HEPP Unit 2	:	11.8 MW
g.	Botocan HEPP Unit 1	:	10 MW
h	Botocan HEPP Unit 2	:	10 MW
i	Botocan HEPP Unit 3	:	0.8 MW

2. In a letter dated April 29, 2005, NPC was informed that the new indirect owners of CBK Power Co. Ltd. are: Electric Power Development Co. Ltd. (JPower) and Sumitomo Corporation through a sale of indirect interest which was completed on January 10, 2005;

3. Under the terms of the BROT and its Supplemental Agreements, IMPSA/CBK PCL now, the JPower and Sumitomo Corporation, shall among others, generate and supply for such period provided therein, the power requirements of the NPC who shall in turn purchase the same under the provisions of the BROT;

4. Schedule 7 of the BROT Agreement shows that the Capital Recovery Fees (CRF) is at the rate of $11.87/kW-Months for Contract Years 1 to 9 and $4.33/kW-Month for the remaining contract years. The Operation and Maintenance Fees (O & M Fees) is at a rate of P26.00/kW-Month. The CRF are the fees payable by NPC in respect to the recovery of the contractor's capital investment, including the return on investment. Whereas, the O & M Fees are fees payble by NPC to contractor in respect of services supplied to NPC. The letter of CBK Power Company dated October 6, 2003 declared the mentioned fees under the Agreement are lump-sum fees and cannot be borken down into components. However, in that same letter, CBK stated that it committed to a 75:25 debt-to-equity ratio and that for budget purposes, it has estimated its operational costs as follows: Personnel related - 48%; Spare Parts - 30%; Consumables - 22%;

5. Based on the data/figures mentioned in the preceding paragraph as provided by CBK, the NPC's IPP Contracts Management Department come up with the following Cost Breakdown/Details of the monthly CRF and O & M Fees of CBK BROT project. The O & M Fee is subject to Adjustment Factor based on the movement of the value of the Philippine Peso against the US Dollar.

Capital Recovery Fee:	$11.87/kW-Month (Year 1-9)	$4.33/kW-Month (Year 10-25)
Debt Service	75% ($8.9025/kW-Mo)	75% ($3.2475/kW-Mo)
Cost of Equity	25% ($2.9625/kW-Mo)	25% ($1.0825/kW-Mo)

O & M Fee:	Base Price	Accumulated Value
	P26/kW-Mo	P57.3508/kW-Mo.
Personnel Related 48%	- P12.48/kW-Mo.	P27.5284/kW-Mo.
Spare Parts 30%	- P7.80/kW-Mo.	P17.2052/kW-Mo.
Consumables 22%	- P5.72/kW-Mo.	P12.6172/kW-Mo.

6. In its letter to Mr. Gerald L. Katz, Chief Executive Officer of CBK Company dated March 18, 2005, requested information from the project proponent/contractor regarding the detailed breakdown of the rehabilitation and construction cost of CBK plants. Indicated in the response letter of CBK dated April 14, 2005, was their certified cost for the rehabilitation of Kalayaan I (Units 1 & 2), Caliraya and Botocan Hydroelectric Plants and the construction of Kalayaan II (Units 3 & 4) HEP which are as follows.

a.	Kalayaan I	-	$144 million
b.	Kalayaan II	-	$260 million
c.	Caliraya	-	$50 million
d.	Botocan	-	$33 million

7. It hereto provides the following reference data and information relative to the rehabilitation of the CBK Project undertaken:

a. Schedule 15 of the CBK BROT Agreement which is a brief description of existing CBK I Power plants prior to its rehabilitation;

b. Schedule 1 of the CBK BROT Agreement which details the scope of works to be undertaken by the proponent in the rehabilitation and upgrading of CBK and the design, supply and construct of Kalayaan II; and

c. The comparison of the Guaranteed Capacity and the result of the Net Contracted Capacity Test of the CBK Power Complex conducted by NPC starting from its completion dates.

8. It provides the following information on the completion dates of the rehabilitation of CBK Stage II hydroelectric power plants:

a. Caliraya		
Unit 1		October 16, 2002
Unit 2		December 3, 2002
b. Botocan		
Unit 1		June 17, 2003
Unit 2	-	June 17, 2003
Unit 3	-	June 20, 2003
c. Kalayaan Stage I		
Unit 1	-	March 22, 2002
Unit 2	-	February 8, 2001
d. Kalayaan Stage II		
Unit 3	-	March 22, 2002
Unit 4	-	January 22, 2004

9. Its cumulative cost of purchased power comprising of O & M Fees and other amounts specified in the Contract and payment of CRFs (recorded in the NPC's books under Payment for Capacity and Infrastructure Fees), covering the entire CBK Complex since the commencement of construction and rehabilitation activities in 2001 amounted to Twenty-Six Billion P26.78 Billion) or an average of about Four Billion Pesos (P4.46 Billion) per annum;

10. Its average cost in peso per kilowatt hour (P/kWh) for the Rehabilitate-Operate-Maintain (ROM) and Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) portion of the BROT contract are P4.1394/kWh and P11.3784/kWh, respecively based on the May 26 to June 25, 2007 billing period;

11. The calculated impact of the cost of this contract on its grid rate in Luzon assuming the contract being applied in this petition is already approved by the Commission before the NPC's filing of the 7th GRAM covering the test period November 2005 to January 2006 shall be an increase of P0.1659/kWh or an additional revenue of P1 505,825,247 88. Likewise, the existing effective rates in Luzon should have been the figures under the effective rate column from the table below:

	APPROVED 7TH GRAM RATE (P/kWh)	GRAM RATE IF CBK WILL BE INCLUDED (P/kWh)	EXISTING EFFECTIVE RATE (P/kWh)	EFFECTIVE RATE (with CBK)
March 2007	0.2034	0.3693	4.8700	5.0559
April 2007	0.2034	0.3693	4.8700	5.0559
May 2007	0.1221	0.3080	4.7857	4.9716
June 2007	0.1221	0.3080	4.7857	4.9716

12. The capacity fee and operation and maintenance cost in line with the implementation of the contract is continuously being paid by NPC through financing while not recovering any amount since the start of the operation of the subject plant in 2001; and

13. Unless this petition is approved provisionally and immediately, its operations and financial viability will be seriously jeopardized.

The Commission has set the application for initial hearing and pre-trial conference on **January 24, 2008 (Thursday) at nine o'clock in the morning (9:00 a.m.) at the ERC Hearing Room, 15th Floor, Pacific Center Building, San Miguel Avenue, Pasig City.**

All persons who have an interest in the subject matter of the proceeding may become a party by filing, at least five (5) days prior to the initial hearing and subject to the requirements in the ERC's Rules of Practice and Procedure, a verified petition with the Commission giving the docket number and the title of the proceeding and stating: (1) the petitioner's name and address; (2) the nature of petitioner's interest in the subject matter of the proceeding, and the way and manner in which such interest is affected by the issues involved in the proceeding; and (3) a statement of the relief desired.

All other persons who may want their views known to the Commission with respect to the subject matter of the proceeding may file their opposition to the application or comment thereon at any stage of the proceeding before the applicant concludes the presentation of its evidence. No particular form of opposition or comment is required, but the document, letter or writing should contain the name and address of such person a concise statement of the opposition or comment and the grounds relied upon.

All such persons who may wish to have a copy of the application may request the applicant, prior to the date of the initial hearing, that they be furnished with a copy of the application. The applicant is hereby directed to furnish all those making such request with copies of the application and its attachments, subject to reimbursement of reasonable photocopying costs. Likewise, any such person may examine the application and other pertinent records filed with the Commission during the usual office hours.

WITNESS, the Honorable **RODOLFO B. ALBANO, JR.**, Chairman and the Honorable Commissioners, **ALEJANDRO Z. BARIN, RAUF A. TAN** and **JOSE C.REYES, Energy Regulatory Commission**, this 5th day of December, 2007 at Pasig City.

(Sgd.) **FRANCIS SATURNINO C. JUAN**
Executive Director

(PDI - Dec. 19 & 26, 2007)

NUEVA ECIJA III ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. – Area 2
2nd Floor Smile Arcade Bldg.,
Brgy. Atate, Palayan City
Telefax (044) 958-1053

NEECO II
Area 2

INVITATION TO SUBMIT BID PROPOSAL

To All Prospective Bidders:

Nueva Ecija II Electric Cooperative, Inc. – Area 2 (NEECO II-Area 2), in compliance with the guidelines of the Energy Regulatory Commission, invites interested parties to participate in the bidding or competitive selection process for the supply of energy requirements to its franchise area commencing on the year 2008 to 2018.

Interested parties must submit a Letter of Interest (LOI) by hand to the NEECO II Area 2 Pre-qualifications, Bids and Awards Committee (PBAC). The LOI, signed by an authorized representative, shall state the full name, address, telephone and fax numbers of the interested party and name of the principal contact. It must be delivered by hand to and received by the PBAC at the NEECO II Area 2 Main Office with address at 2nd Floor Smile Arcade Building, Brgy. Atate, Palayan City not later than 12:00 noon, on January 9, 2008.

The details of the bidding or competitive selection process are contained in the Request for Proposal (RFP), which interested parties must secure from PBAC Secretary, Alicia Alcantara, during office hours (8:00 am to 5:00 pm) from December 19, 2007 to January 9, 2008, upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Ten Thousand Pesos (P10,000.00).

Only interested parties that submit the LOI on time and who have been issued and have paid for the RFP will be qualified to participate.

(Sgd.) **RAMON M. DE VERA**
General Manager

(Sgd.) **JUANITA G. IGNACIO**
Chairman, PBAC

(PDI–December 19 & 26, 2007)

The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Thaksin to return home from exile

THAKSIN talks at a press conference in Hong Kong. AP

HONG KONG—OUSTED PRIME MINISTER Thaksin Shinawatra said on Tuesday he would return to Thailand from exile after the party he backed emerged from weekend elections front runner to form a coalition government.

Thaksin, his party dissolved after a bloodless 2006 coup and he barred from politics for five years for electoral fraud, told a Hong Kong news conference he wanted to clear himself of the corruption charges brought by military-appointed investigators.

He declared again he would not re-enter politics when he returned "by April at the latest."

But, in a statement likely to upset his many enemies inside and outside the military, Thaksin said he would be happy to advise the People Power Party his supporters took over after their party was dissolved.

"I will not take any political position," he said after the PPP won 232 of the 480 seats in parliament in Sunday's election and started trying to put a coalition government together.

"That's enough. I am quitting politics," he said, but added: "I will give my ideas free of charge" if the PPP asked for them.

Thaksin called for reconciliation in a country the election proved still deeply divided between the urban middle classes whose mass protests preceded the coup and the countryside which swept him to two landslide election victories.

"I urge everybody concerned to forget the past and look forward to the bright and prosperous future for Thailand," he said.

However, the precise course Thai politics will take is still far from clear, with most parties saying they are unlikely to reveal their hands until the military appointed Election Commission finalizes the results, expected by Jan. 3.

The commission is also investigating scores of allegations of electoral fraud and there are frequently expressed suspicions that there will be military pressure to disqualify PPP winners and whittle down its numbers.

"A PPP-led coalition would be a frontal assault on the Establishment, pitting the forces and interests of the majority of the electorate against those of a significant minority that includes Bangkok," political analyst Thitinan Pongsudhirak said.

"Perhaps this is Thailand's inevitable reckoning, a collision course that was bound to arrive on the scene after decades of willful neglect of the majority by the minority," he wrote in the Bangkok Post newspaper.

The PPP won almost 50 percent of the popular vote, mostly in the rural heartlands where Thaksin is regarded as the first Thai leader to pay serious attention to poor country folk through cheap health care and pumping money into the villages.

Bangkok went solidly for the Democrat Party, the main opposition during Thaksin's five years in power, which won 165 seats and is favored by the military and royalist establishment.

Despite the prospects of the political turmoil of the past two years continuing, the Thai stock market rose one percent on reopening on Tuesday, a day after an election holiday.

Domestic investors believed the results of the weekend's general election would help improve domestic political stability and economic growth, likely to fall from 5.1 percent in 2006 towards 4 percent this year, the lowest rate in six years.

But there were still fears the polarization of the country, which has had 18 coups in 75 years of on-off democracy, could result in more bloodshed and another military intervention. *Reuters*

No letup for Christmas for US troops in Iraq

BAGHDAD—CHRISTMAS EVE, late afternoon, and US soldiers from 4th Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Regiment piled into their Stryker armored vehicles for a patrol out on the streets of Baghdad.

This is the fifth Christmas that US troops have been out in Iraq, and commanders say the best way to keep morale up is to keep moving.

There are special dinners, packages from home, religious services and decorations around camp, but no let-up in patrols.

"My personal goal would be to try to go ahead and keep the mission constant," said Ray Ramsey, who has spent 23 years in the Army and his third Christmas in Iraq, looking after about 100 men as the first sergeant of a Stryker troop.

"We want to recognize it, go ahead and acknowledge it and wish everybody a Merry Christmas. But if you make too much of it you give them probably an opportunity to dwell on where they're not and what they're not having right now," he said.

Iraq has become far less violent in recent months, and the mood among troops is visibly lighter than in Christmases past.

So far in December, 17 US servicemen have died in Iraq, putting it on course to be the safest month for Americans since the war began, according to figures on website icasualties.org.

Forty US servicemen died in Iraq in November, compared with 131 in May.

The 4th Squadron received a flood of goodwill packages this Christmas from friends and family of a soldier who was killed.

The squadron chaplain, Capt. Bryan Smith, was giving out the gifts by opening up a Christmas Eve "store" where everything is free. He said he had given out Xbox controllers and portable CD players as well as soft-drinks and snacks.

Presents from home keep soldiers' spirits up, he said.

"You get the blues around Christmas time," he said. *Reuters*

Kyrgyzstan is Santa's new home

BISHKEK—SEEKING A NOVEL remedy to revive its rickety economy, the tiny ex-Soviet state of Kyrgyzstan has declared itself the new home of Santa Claus.

Citing Swedish engineering firm that determined the ideal spot for Santa's global toy delivery hub, officials in this predominantly Muslim country have quickly moved to capitalize on the finding.

They named a mountain peak after Santa, to join Mounts Lenin, and Yeltsin, and declared 2008 "The Year of Santa Claus." "Its slogan will be "Kyrgyzstan is the land of Santa Clauses," said Kyrgyz tourism authority spokesperson Nurkhon Tajibayeva.

In most Western countries Santa Claus, or Father Christmas, is thought to live at the North Pole or in Finland. However, if he were located in Central Asia and started westwards on his traditional Christmas Eve trips, Kyrgyz officials said he would have a more efficient delivery route.

"He can eliminate time-consuming detours and avoid subjecting his reindeer to undue strain," engineering consultants at Stockholm-based Sweco, who used geography and demographics in their research, said in a press release.

A group of professional mountain-climbers will pitch the country's flag at the newly renamed peak, Kyrgyzstan's tourism authority said, while a world festival of Santas is planned for the capital's main square. *Reuters*

KYRGYZ schoolchildren return home after taking part in 'The Best Santa' contest in the village of Tash-Moinok. Some Swedish experts insist Santa should have his home based somewhere in the mountainous ex-Soviet state because it is the only place from which he can reach on time every home on earth during the short Christmas period. REUTERS

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Wednesday, December 26, 2007
Stephen, 1st Martyr

1st Reading: Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59
Gospel: Matthew 10:17-22

Jesus said to his disciples, "Be on your guard with respect to people, for they will hand you over to their courts and they will flog you in their synagogues. You will be brought to trial before rulers and kings because of me, and so you may witness to them and the pagans.

"But when you are arrested, do not worry about what you are to say and how you are to say it; when the hour comes, you will be given what you are to say. For it is not you who will speak; but it will be the Spirit of your Father in you.

"Brother will hand over brother to death, and a father his child; children will turn against parents and have them put to death. Everyone will hate you because of me, but whoever stands firm to the end will be saved."

Commentary

The child is born to us. And the child will die with us, for us. And those who are close to him, who follow him, will be born in him and die with him. Stephen is the first to die, proclaiming who this Child truly is—Jesus the Beloved of God, prophet, and crucified one risen from the dead by his Father in the power of the Spirit. Stephen seeks to live as Jesus did, in service to his brothers and sisters, and he dies as Jesus died, praying to God to forgive those who murder him. The dying and rising in Jesus the Son of God has begun.

We have been baptized into the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and we too are called to proclaim the Word of God in Jesus and if necessary to stand and speak the truth of who this child born to us is—the Son of Man, the crucified one, Son of the Father, the fullness of the Spirit. We will be given of the fullness of that Spirit when we stand as the children of God before the world. God became flesh, and so now, it is our flesh that must bear God's Word to the world.

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WORLDBRIEFS

Midnight Mass at ground zero

NEW YORK—The first midnight Mass at ground zero happened while workers were still clearing away the debris of the fallen twin towers and recovering bodies from the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attack. The last Mass was held Monday night, giving police, firefighters, ground zero workers and Sept. 11 families a final chance to pray on Christmas Eve at the site, where intensifying construction is taking up more and more open space. "It was poignant, it was moving, it was uplifting," the Rev. Brian Jordan said after the service ended early Tuesday. *AP*

Child porn ring probed

BERLIN—Prosecutors in the eastern German state of Saxony-Anhalt are investigating 12,000 people on suspicion of possessing illegal images of children, state prosecutor Peter Vogt told German radio on Monday. "They face charges of downloading … child pornography," Vogt told MDR radio. Vogt said the probe was launched in the spring and has since traced suspects in 70 different countries. It began the investigation after a tip from a Berlin internet provider. *Reuters*

4 dead in Pakistan ambush

QUETTA—Pakistani rebels ambushed a pickup truck in the remote southwest, killing at least four people and injuring three others, authorities and the militants said on Tuesday. The vehicle, carrying seven men from the pro-government Masuri Bugti tribe to a local gas field, was attacked with a rocket by a group of masked men near Nilagh, about 350 km east of Quetta, said Najamuddin Tareen, the area police chief. The Baluch Liberation Army, a militant group demanding greater rights and increased royalties for gas and minerals claimed responsibility. *AP*

Artillery attack in Sri Lanka

COLOMBO—Sri Lankan soldiers killed 13 Tamil Tiger rebels in an artillery attack and gunbattles along the northern front lines, the military said on Tuesday. Troops stationed in the village of Pokkaravai, in Vavuniya district, came under heavy rebel mortar attacks on Monday. Return fire killed two guerrillas, said a defense ministry official. The attack wounded two soldiers, said the official on condition of anonymity as he was not authorized to speak to the media. *AP*

Indonesia boat accident

JAKARTA—Indonesian rescuers searched for seven people still missing on Tuesday after a boat sank in high seas off Sumatra island, leaving two people dead, police said. Five survivors were found after the accident in the Malacca Strait on Monday, said local police chief Agus Sarjito. *Reuters*

22 killed in suicide car blast near Iraq residential complex

BAGHDAD—A SUICIDE CAR bomb exploded outside a residential complex belonging to a state-run oil company north of Baghdad on Tuesday, killing 22 people and wounding 80, police, local hospital officials and the US military said.

Local authorities said that victims were still being pulled from the rubble of two destroyed buildings and that the death toll was expected to rise.

The bomber, who was driving a pickup truck, detonated his explosives when Iraqi police and members of a volunteer security force prevented him from entering the gate of the compound belonging to the state-run North Oil Company in Beiji, about 250 kilometers north of Baghdad, a police officer said. He said some of the residential buildings were damaged in the blast.

Most of the 22 killed were civilians, and at least three were children, the police officer said. The dead also included guards of the oil company and members of the volunteer force.

An official at the main hospital in Beiji gave the same casualty figures and said 50 were wounded.

Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to release information to the media.

The US military said in a statement that 20 people were killed and 80 wounded. The reason for the discrepancy in casualty figures was not immediately clear.

Authorities imposed a curfew on the city—home to the country's largest refinery—until further notice.

Volunteer forces known as Awakening Councils—groups of Sunni Arab fighters who have turned against al-Qaida and are now funded by the US—have been credited with helping reduce violence in Iraq in recent months. Although bombings and other attacks continue throughout the country, their number has fallen. The US military has said there has been a 60 percent decrease in violence since June. *AP*

Somali kidnappers free French journalist

SBC
Radio/Tv

LE GOUIL REUTERS

BOSASSO—SOMALI GUNMEN released on Monday a French journalist they had kidnapped eight days ago in the northern Puntland region, local officials said.

"The French journalist has just been released and is now staying with officials, local elders and some diplomats in the hotel," Puntland trade and industry minister Abdishamad Yusuf Abwan told Reuters.

Witnesses said the kidnappers handed Gwen Le Gouil to French diplomats at a hotel in Bosasso earlier on Monday.

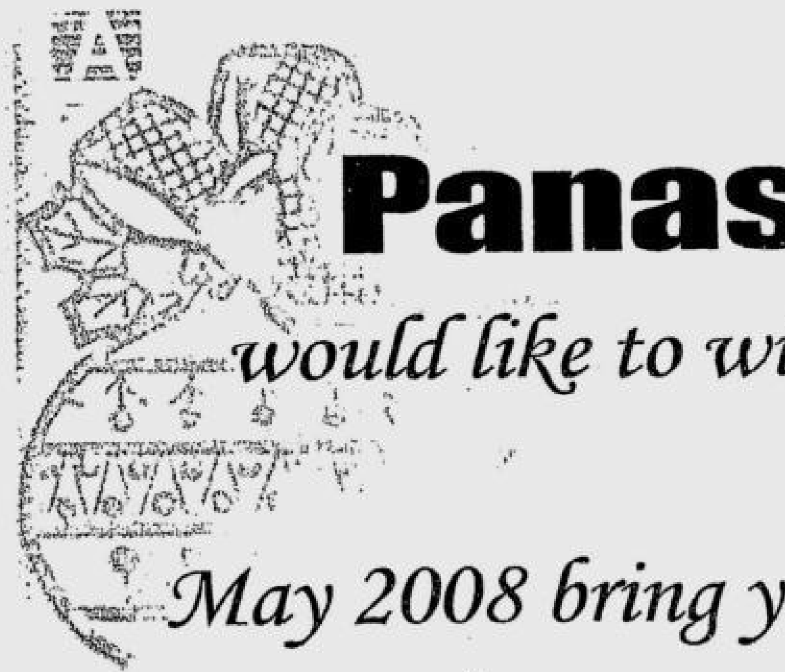
"I'm fine. I'm healthy. I'm only feeling very tired," Le Gouil told a brief news conference in Puntland's main port. "I'm very happy to be free to go back to France and see my family."

Fisheries Minister Ahmed Saeed Awnur said no ransom had been paid for the Frenchman. The gunmen were reportedly demanding up to $80,000 for his safe return.

"The journalist was released without condition. Whoever was responsible for the abduction will face the law," he said.

A French diplomat at the press conference, who asked not to be named, thanked the local authorities and told reporters:

"We're leaving Puntland tomorrow because it's Christmas, which is very important." *Reuters*



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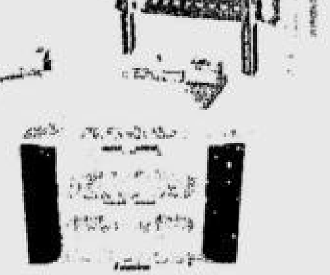

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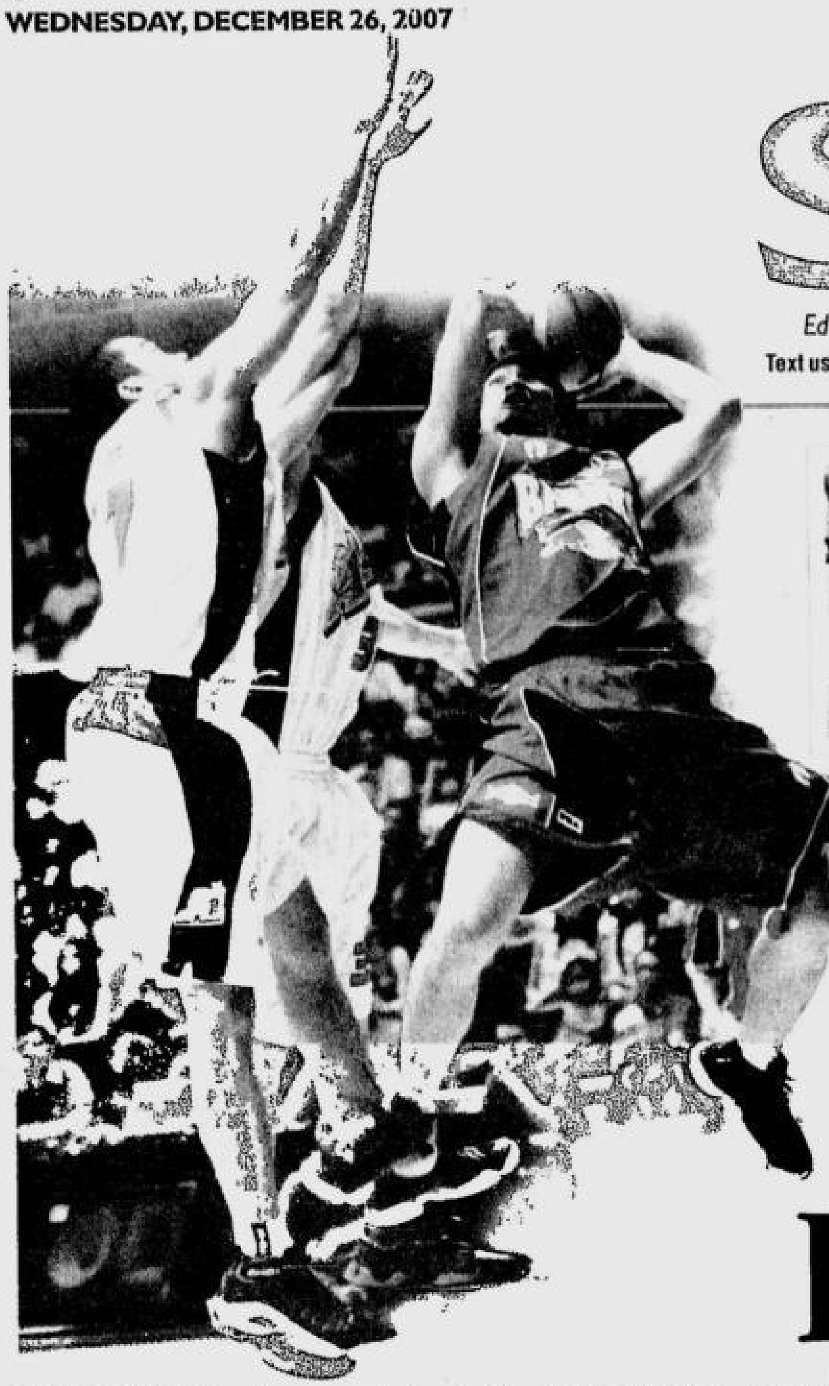
WHAT'S INSIDE
- **Athletes'needs** to get priority, says Ramirez /A22
- **Tired of losing,** Bulls sack coach /A24
- **La Salle gets** to the heart of the matter /A23



RED BULL'S Jojo Duncil puts up a shot against two Alaska defenders. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Ginebra surprises Purefoods

Alaska crushes Red Bull, Cone surprised

GAMES FRIDAY (*Araneta Coliseum*)
4:50 p.m.—Sta. Lucia vs Welcoat
7:20 p.m.—Magnolia vs Air21

By Musong R. Castillo

SURPRISES REALLY DO COME on Christmas Day—and they're not just for kids.

Alaska and Barangay Ginebra got a pleasant dose of surprise yesterday, hammering out wins hardly expected of them in the Smart-PBA Philippine Cup at a festive Araneta Coliseum.

An Alaska team that was in shambles the last two games suddenly played great, and the Aces got back on the winning track in a manner that left even their coach, the usually-talkative Tim Cone, struggling to find the words.

"I don't know what it was," Cone said minutes later after his Aces annihilated Red Bull, 100-77. "I honestly didn't think we would win today, much less in the way we did.

"This one was a complete surprise, to tell you the truth."

Alaska established control early and never let up, building leads of as many as 34 points late in the fourth period to snap a two-game slide and improve to 9-7 that kept the Aces mathematically in the hunt for one of the two automatic semifinal seats.

But the Kings were even more surprising.

Down by 19 early against a team that has so far dominated the tournament, Barangay Ginebra rallied to pound out a 100-98 victory over tournament leader Purefoods in the second game.

It was just the seventh win in 16 games for the Kings, who moved 2-1/2 games behind the 9-6 Barako for second spot while the loss was the fourth in 15 games for the Giants.

Sunday Salvacion knocked in the go-ahead triple with 57.4 left to give Ginebra a 95-93 spread and finished with 21 points, the same output plugged in by Eric Menk.

James Yap and Kerby Raymundo, who committed a crucial boo-boo later, had 20 each to pace the Tender Juicy Giants.

"We have really been struggling with our energy the last couple of weeks," Cone, who won a Grand Slam with this franchise in 1996, added. "We were just talking of trying to steal one (win) today by keeping it close (in the endgame).

"I didn't think the energy would suddenly come back today."

Mike Cortez scored 19 points and John Ferriols shot 15 and grabbed the same number of boards as Alaska, which lost the 2002 All-Filipino to Coca-Cola on Christmas, won for the first time in three games on this particular playdate.

Red Bull shot a lethargic 27-percent from the field, which statisticians later said could be the worst in the rich history of the franchise.

"We shot the ball pretty well today," Cone

ALASKA/ A23

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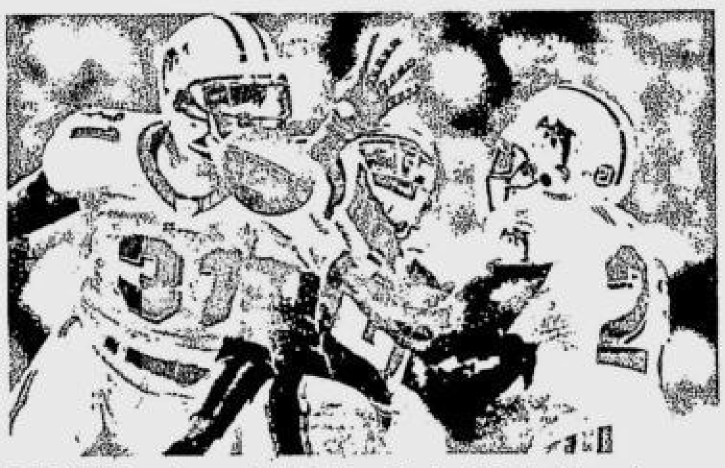

RANDY Moss (center) of the New England Patriots has always had to face tag-team defenses such as the one put up by Miami Dolphins' Lance Schulters (left) and Will Allen. AFP

Patriots have Moss running for record

FOXBOROUGH—THREE DEfenders were draped around receiver Randy Moss, and quarterback Tom Brady delivered a high-arcing bomb in his direction anyway. The second-half pass fell incomplete.

So the question was posed to Moss after the Patriots' 28-7 victory over the Dolphins yesterday: Is it important that the team keeps taking those shots, even if they're not working?

Moss, who has shown a quick wit in post-game news conferences in recent weeks, didn't hesitate with the reply.

"Hell, I'm Randy Moss, what do you expect?" he shot back with a smile.

Moss did finish with five catches for 50 yards and two touchdowns—his 20th and 21st on the season. With one more TD reception, he will tie Jerry Rice's record for most touchdown catches in a season.

At times yesterday, after Moss scored his touchdowns in the first half, it seemed as if the Patriots were attempting to get him the record. But Moss indicated he's not concerned one way or the other.

"Records are meant to be broken. If I break the record, I'm cool. If I don't, I'm cool," Moss said. "As long as that zero

PATRIOTS/ A23

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Character plays vital role in PBL finals—Alas

By Jasmine W. Payo

VETERAN MENTOR LOUIE ALAS NOTED that team character will spell the difference in the PBL championship showdown between Hapee Toothpaste and Harbour Centre.

"It will be a very interesting series," said Alas. "They're both talented teams and they have players who can score and defend. But overall, it will depend on their character and their discipline to execute their plays both offensively and defensively."

Hapee and Harbour Centre, both seeking a historic title run, will clash in Game 1 of the best-of-three series at 4 p.m. tomorrow at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum.

Toyota Balintawak and San Mig Coffee will dispute third place in a knockout game at 2 p.m.

Alas, who assisted coach Junel Baculi in the Harbour-Philippine team's recent golden performance in the 24th Southeast Asian Games, cited the Complete Protectors' aggressiveness and height advantage.

"They're peskier," said Alas of the Complete Protectors, who are aiming to cap their perfect 11-0 run with a championship. "But you also can't belittle the small guards of Harbour Centre."

Alas was referring to TY Tang, Al Vergara and Fil-Am Solomon Mercado whom coach Jorge Gallent usually used if they need to launch 3-point bombs in the hope of changing the complexion of the game.

He continued: "With Gabe Norwood around, [Hapee coach Jun Noel] can opt for a taller first five. They also have a deeper bench."

Aside from the 6-foot-5 Norwood, Jun Noel's other regular starters are 6-foot-1 Reed Juntilla, 6-foot-4 Mark Borboran, 6-foot-5 Larry Rodriguez and 6-foot-5 Roel Hugnatan.

Yet Alas noted the building momentum of Batang Pier, the powerhouse bidding for a record fourth straight crown.

"It's impressive when a team recovers after losing Game 1 in a short series; but Harbour did that against San Mig Coffee (in the semifinals)," he said. "Even better, they won the next two games of the series by wide margins. I don't know how Hapee would react if they lose Game 1. That's where the team's character will come in."

"Since both teams are disciples of up-tempo brand of play I can see a high-scoring game, " said Alas, who guided the Letran Knights to several NCAA championships.

Meanwhile, the PBL extends its Christmas treat during the Finals series by raffling off special items to the audience starting tomorrow.

Among the prizes that will be given away are one Suzuki Smash Motorcycle, three Xtreme Magic Sing Version 9 videoke microphones, Fukuda TV, LG no-frost refrigerator, five LG microwaves and other products from SM Appliance Center.

Athletes' needs to get priority, says Ramirez

MIGUEL Molina: Onward to the Beijing Olympics.

RAFFY LERMA

By June Navarro

THE REQUIREMENTS NEEDED BY the athletes for an international multi-event gathering are normally issued days before the tournament proper. Worse, these necessities sometimes come on competition day itself.

The partnership of the Philippine Olympic Committee and the Philippine Sports Commission for the 2008 Olympics has decided to do away with the cramming by addressing the needs of the athletes early in the new year.

"We don't want a repeat of what athletics had gone through in the SEA (Southeast Asian) Games," said PSC chair William "Butch" Ramirez.

The track and field athletes received their competition shoes during the tournament apart from the late arrival of some of the equipment to be used by the Nationals for the centerpiece event in Nakhon, Ratchasima, Thailand.

Consequently, the Philippines captured only five gold medals in athletics, a far cry from the usual nine to 11 golds the country had won on its previous SEAG campaigns.

"To prevent that incident from happening again, we will complete all the requirements with respect to uniforms and equipment on the first three months of the year," said Ramirez.

"So by the second quarter of the year, all the coaches and athletes have to think about is their focus on training."

Ramirez will spearhead a core group tasked to oversee the preparations for the Beijing Games next year along with POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco.

Determined on its drive to win the first-ever Olympic gold, the group immediately designated POC first vice president Monico Puentevella as Philippine chief of mission to the Games.

Taekwondo jins Tshomlee Go and Marie Antoinette Rivero, Harry Tañamor of boxing and archer Mark Javier have already made it to the quadrennial meet after passing their respective Olympic qualifying events.

SEA Games quadruple-gold medalist and MVP Miguel Molina has also passed the Olympic qualifying along with fellow national swimmers JB Walsh, Ryan Arabejo and Daniel Coakley.

God knows what's wrong with RP sports

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

(CELEBRATION: A FEW SELFLESS entrepreneurs gather again in a cool, tree-lined farm lot in Barangay Pangao, Lipa City tomorrow for what they have been doing for over half a decade now. They celebrate the birth of Christ by handing out bagfuls of gifts and a little cash to poor farm children in the area. Civic leader Nandy Charvet of Mandaluyong City sent in dental care items and beach balls as early as November, trader Lucio Yan of Dowell Philippines gave cash, Mang Ramon Rivera delivered boxes of fruits, sportsman Bambi Rivilla, with Barts Mayo, brought rice and sardines, the Philippine Basketball League contributed snack items. Dr. Ruel Reyes of ATR World's Best Wines and Spirits, distributor of Torres brandy, motors from nearby San Pablo with separate bags of goodies for over 50 families. There will be pieces of ham, stuffed toys, and other items courtesy of Gerry Mayor, Mar Maralit and Rene Monte, main coordinator. As in the past, giver and recipient end up equally satisfied.)

* * *

Jesus, the carpenter's son, loves athletes and poor game fans so much he recently thought of checking what's wrong with Philippine sports.

For example, the Redeemer wanted to zero in on self-styled RP sports leaders who, fresh from another people-funded junket, were frantically trying to beat one another in stating what went wrong in the last Southeast Asian Games.

Well, Christ was obviously taken aback upon seeing that RP sports, based on its showing in the Thailand Games where it tumbled down close to the garbage bin, needed more than just an instant repair job.

* * *

The disease was so grave it would require a major surgery, nothing short of multi-organ transplant, if RP sports is to function effectively, heroically.

But there lies the bigger woe.

Based on the conflicting prognostications subsequent excuses of these sports leaders, they honestly had the slightest clue that the biggest problem was none other than themselves.

No kidding. They were the malfunctioning organs that needed instant replacement. They had long surpassed the level of their uselessness, thereby causing wide-spread illness that had resulted in many failed sports missions abroad.

* * *

Of course, these officials have succeeded in staying put, through thick and thin, while RP sports itself, not to mention countless Pinoy fans, reels with repeated defeats and humiliations.

For example, one leader saw the lack of funding as the biggest obstacle.

Another official humbly admitted the debacle in Thailand was a learning experience, while a third one claimed the athletes did well.

They've got to know what's intrinsically wrong first, before they could agree on a proper solution.

Right? Well, nothing really wrong with the RP athletes, many of them were capable of winning as shown by some Filipino competitors, mainly in swimming.

* * *

The problem was that many athletes also often ended up at the wrong place and the wrong place.

Why? Because many among those who called the shots for Team Philippines had a very vague idea and limited know-how on how to do it right and win.

In fact, there were even those who would stage a walkout and shame the whole nation, in order to save face.

The sanest solution, needless to say, is for these sick sports officials to make a supreme sacrifice.

They've got to step down, now!

This, they didn't have to be told by Christ Himself!

Unfortunately, God knows this form of selfless sacrifice is next to impossible in dear old *yabang* Philippines.

MARIKINA City Mayor Marides Carlos Fernando and Grandmaster Eugene Torre do the ceremonial moves ushering the Marikina City Age Group Invitational Chess Championships last Sunday at the Marikina Sports Complex. Joining them are MCF head Johnny "Joel" Gaudia and National Master Rudy Ibañez.

Reyes, Mejia top Marikina age-group meet

ARCHIE REYES AND CHERRY ANN Mejia topped the Marikina City Age Group Invitational Chess Championships at the Marikina Sports Complex on Sunday.

Archie, 15, defeated Arden Reyes, 14, in the fifth and final round to bag the title in the juniors division (18 and under).

Archie finished with 4.5 points, the same output of MJ Turqueza, but took the title via the tie break.

In the kiddies division (14 and under), Cherry Ann, 12, split the point with Normel De Jesus, 12, to create a three-way tie with Homel Cunanan, 10, and De Jesus for first place with 4.5 points each. Cherry Ann emerged winner when the tie break was applied.

Marlon Bernardino

So heads RP squad vying in Asian meet

YOUNG SENSATION WESLEY So will spearhead a strong Philippine team to the Asian Chess Team Championships slated Jan. 2-11, 2008 in Visakhapatnam, South India.

Joining So, currently the world's youngest Grandmaster at 14, are GMs Joey Antonio, Eugene Torre and Mark Paragua and International master Julio Catalino Sadorra.

National Chess Federation of the Philippines president Prospero "Butch" Pichay and NCFP secretary-general and Tagaytay City Mayor Abraham "Bambol" Tolentino jointly announce the country's participation in the tournament during a special gathering of players and media at the Syncopado's Restaurant along A. Mabini St., Malate.

The 10-day competition regularly attracts top chess-playing countries in Asia and the former Soviet republics.

So completed his GM requirements at age 14 years, one month and 28 days during the final round of the Pichay Cup chess championship held at the Duty Free Fiesta Mall in Parañaque City on Dec. 8.

The women's team will be composed of Sherie Joy Lomibao, Beverly Mendoza, Sherily Cua and Catherine Perena.

"This will be our initial salvo for the new year," said Pichay, who is running for reelection as head of the country's chess body during the annual NCFP election on Jan. 19 at the Tagaytay International Convention Center.

Tolentino, on the other hand, said the combination of youth (So, Sadorra) and experience (Torre, Antonio and Paragua) makes the five-man RP team as "one of the teams to beat in the Asian tournament."

SPORTSWATCH

Makati 6-cock derby finals today

THE TWO-PART CHAMPIONSHIP round of *Pamaskong Salpukan* 6-cock derby starts today at the Makati Coliseum with over 100 quality matches on tap.

Participants who scored 1 and 1.5 points in the previous qualifying round will compete today. Those with 2 points will battle it out on Saturday.

Hosts Lito Orillaza, Rudy Salud and William Co of WTJ Sports and Amusement Corp. are dangling a guaranteed prize of P4 million to the winners.

Meanwhile, cockfights at Sta. Ana Cockpit which was closed down for good recently will be transferred to Makati Coliseum beginning tomorrow.

Sta. Ana's regular *sabong* schedule (Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday) will be supervised by WTJ Sports and Amusement Corp.

For details, call 8963545, 8956475 and 4898828 (Joan or Stephanie).

RACING TIPS

BY TOP CHOICE

Race 1—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Balabushka (6), Allez Allez (1), My Rae (3), Surround Sound (8), Dumagundong (2)

Race 2—(Qrt/Tri)—Rivendel (3), Hazir Coming (1), Que Fresca (7), Lyanjonik (6)

Race 3—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Queen Esther (5), Flaming heart (9), Cool Reception (7), Dato's Pride (1), Friendly Fire (4)

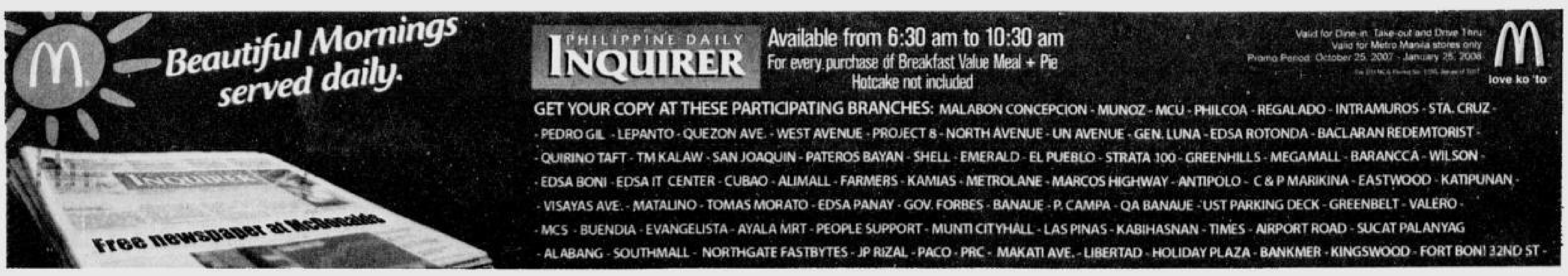
Race 4—(Qrt/Tri)—Hurry My Love (3), Please Don't Stop (2), Dancing Slew (7), China Girl (5)

Race 5—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Mainstay (4), Expiditer (5), Madam Leonara (2), Princess Leighla (8), Taste Of Magic (3)

Race 6—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Now Showing (9), Queen's Abbey (3), Reporter (5), Kepp On Going (6), Getting Personal (4)

Race 7—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Andorra (11), Ferrarione (12), Reptoid (10), Silent Operator (7), Tonic Water (3)

Race 8—(Super 6/Qrt/Tri)—Red Hot Water (10), Hepburn (9), Coquette (13); Blondie Baj (4), Hoy Sobra Na (1), Sugar Ray (11)



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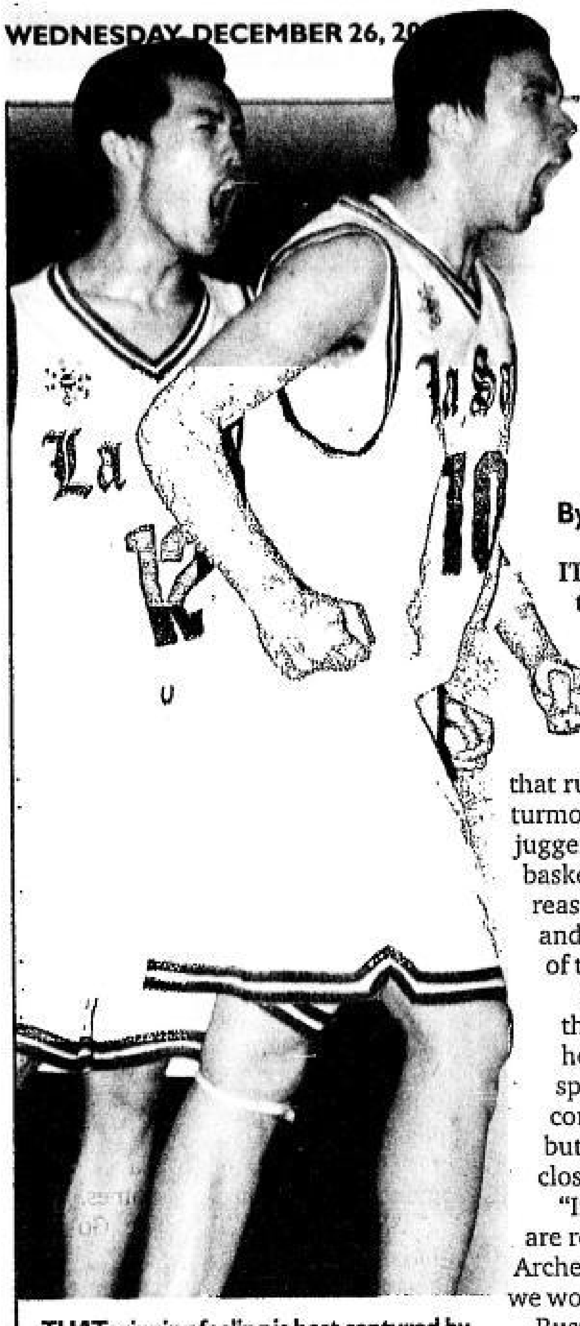


THAT winning feeling is best captured by the likes of Miguel Okubo (left) and Joshua Webb of the juniors squad. PDI PHOTO

La Salle gets to the heart of the matter in comeback

By Jasmine W. Payo

IT WAS UNDERSTANDABLE that rust would creep into the La Salle sports machine, especially after a one-year suspension kept them out of the competitive arena.

But there was one place that rust could not reach. And all the turmoil in the world could not stop a juggernaut anchored on a rock-solid basketball program because of one reason: The Archers, both seniors and juniors, knew that in the heart of the matter, heart really matters.

Fueled by a throbbing pride that refused to be reined in and a heart that wouldn't give up despite the odds, La Salle capped its comeback year with not just one, but two basketball titles at the close of the UAAP hoop wars.

"Individually, I think my players are really not that great," said Green Archers coach Franz Pumaren. "But we worked as a team."

Rust? It sure looked as if the suspension wrought by a harrowing eligibility scandal lasted just for a day as the collegiate powerhouse picked up right where it last left off.

As the only squad to consistently enter the Final Four, the Archers' return stint this season turned out no different with TY Tang, Cholo Villanueva, JV Casio and Rico Maierhofer leading the charge.

"It only showed how we really prepared for the season," said Pumaren.

The La Salle Zobel Junior Archers—the 2005 champion turned unwitting casualty of the punishment meted on the seniors team—also made positive use of the forced break.

"We were never given a chance to defend our championship last year, but the good part was we started early with our preparation for this season," said Zobel coach Boris Aldeguer.

Although early losses pointed to the damaging effects of the suspension, the UAAP Finals erased any doubts as the La Salle seniors and juniors squads pulled off upset sweeps.

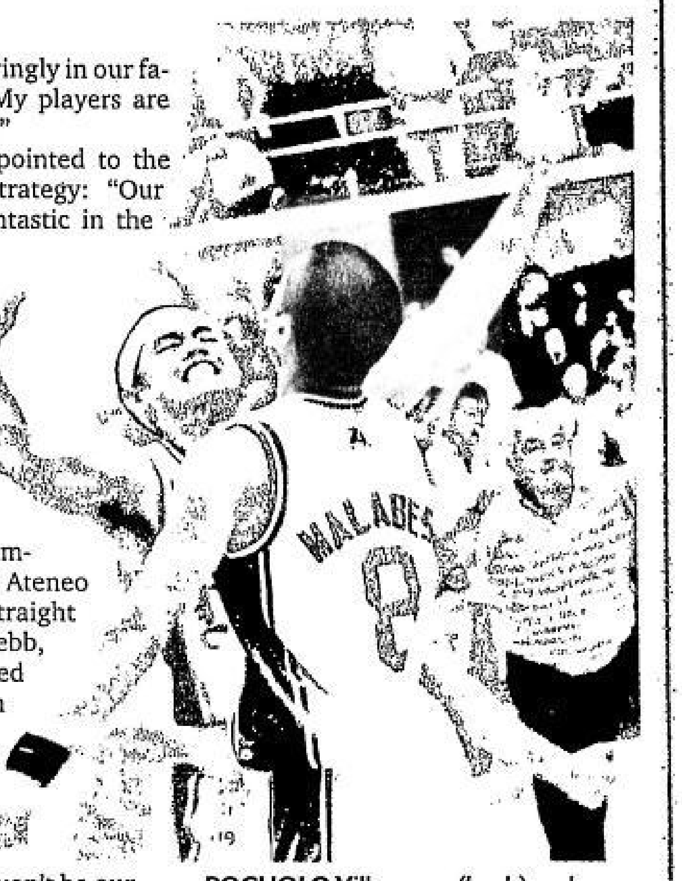
The Green Archers spoiled the perfect 14-0 elimination run of the University of the East Red Warriors during the best-of-three championship showdown to capture their seventh crown.

"Experience was glaringly in our favor," said Pumaren. "My players are veterans of many wars."

But Pumaren, too, pointed to the Archers' trademark strategy: "Our defense was really fantastic in the series. We could not outscore them, they're too talented, so we tried to hold them [down]."

In a similarly unexpected feat, the Junior Archers toppled defending champion and fierce rival Ateneo Blue Eaglets in two straight games with Joshua Webb, Marco Fortuna and Jed Manguera starring in their second title run.

"We played Ateneo in the elimination and we were beaten badly; and I thought this won't be our year, but the boys refused to give up," said Aldeguer.



POCHOLO Villanueva (back) and Bader Malabes celebrate a victory over the UE Red Warriors. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Alaska clobbers Red Bull

From page A21

added. "And they shot absolutely horrible. I wish I could say that their 27 percent (shooting) was because of our defense."

Alaska didn't need to play much defense, as Red Bull, the runner-up to Barangay Ginebra last year, really did not have the luck of making shots out of the ordinary.

The Barako actually couldn't make all the ordinary shots that came their way.

Only Cyrus Baguio finished in double figures for Red Bull with 18. Junthy Valenzuela, who came into the game averaging 14.9 points, wound up with just two.

Jeffrey Cariaso also scattered 15 and Willie Miller, the reigning MVP, had 13 points, five rebounds and seven assists, his spin move inside the paint that eluded two defenders giving the Aces a 73-44 lead with 1:22 left in the third.

The Alaska victory was very important since it put the Aces back inside the circle of teams that would make the playoff outright, at least in the quarterfinals.

The scores:

First Game

ALASKA 100—Cortez 19, Ferriols 15, Cariaso 15, Miller 13, Thoss 12, Hugnatan 11, Aban 8, Dela Cruz 5, Bono 2, Quiñahan 0, Cabatu 0, Laure 0.

RED BULL 77—Baguio 18, Bugia 8, Cruz 8, Duncil 7, Najorda 7, Ybañez 7, Pennisi 7, Camaso 5, Sharma 3, Robinson 3, Hrabak 2, Valenzuela 2.

Quarters: 25-11, 43-28, 74-47, 100-77

Second Game

BARANGAY GINEBRA 100—Salvacion 21, Menk 21, Tubid 18, Helterbrand 13, Reavis 10, Macapagal 6, Artadi 6, Mamaril 3, Aquino 2.

PUREFOODS 98—J. Yap 20, Raymundo 20, Simon 18, Pingris 12, R. Yap 10, Sanz 7, Adducul 5, Larong 4, Yee 2, Salvador 0, Evangelista 0.

Quarters: 13-30, 41-48, 67-72, 100-98

Patriots...

From page A21

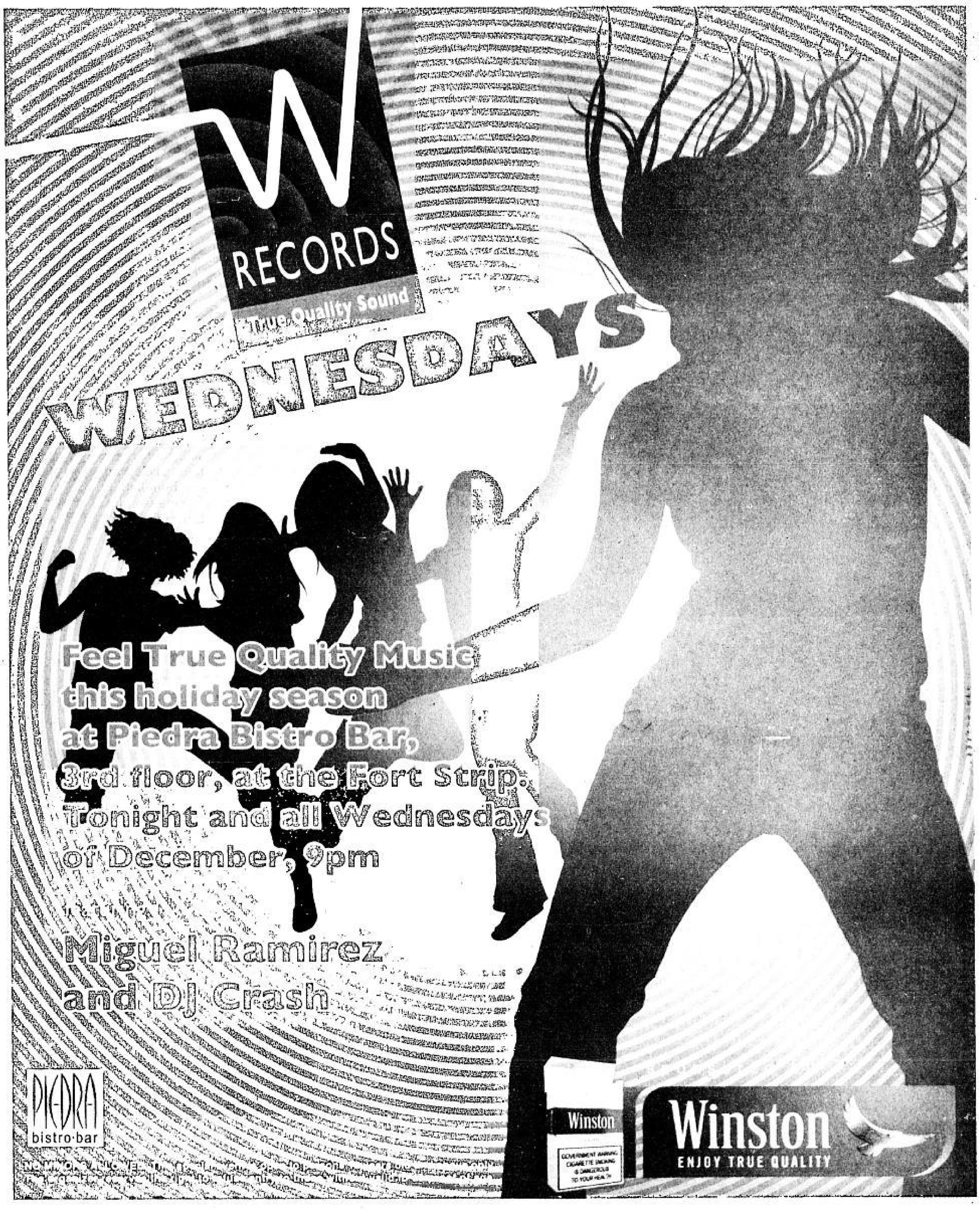
stays in that (loss) column, I'm fine. Basically what I'm saying is that I want to keep winning. To hell with the record."

Along those lines, Moss touched on the team's 15-0 record.

"I don't think the people, and when I say the people I mean the fans of the game of football, I don't think they realize what we're doing, how hard of work we're putting in to what we're trying to accomplish," he said. "Coach Belichick, before this team was ever brought together, he's already had a history of being able to get things done late in the season, basically come playoff time to make that run."

Last week, Brady threw 13 of his 28 passes in the direction of Moss. Yesterday, he continued to fire passes in Moss's neighborhood, at times seemingly forcing balls into heavy coverage.

"He's had an incredible season for us and it's obvious they pay a lot of attention to him when he's out there on the field, as they should, and you have to find ways to keep him involved," Brady said. "He ran a great route on his first touchdown. (His) second touchdown was a great catch, and whenever he's open he usually gets it. Even when he's not open sometimes I throw it up there." *NYTimes News Service*



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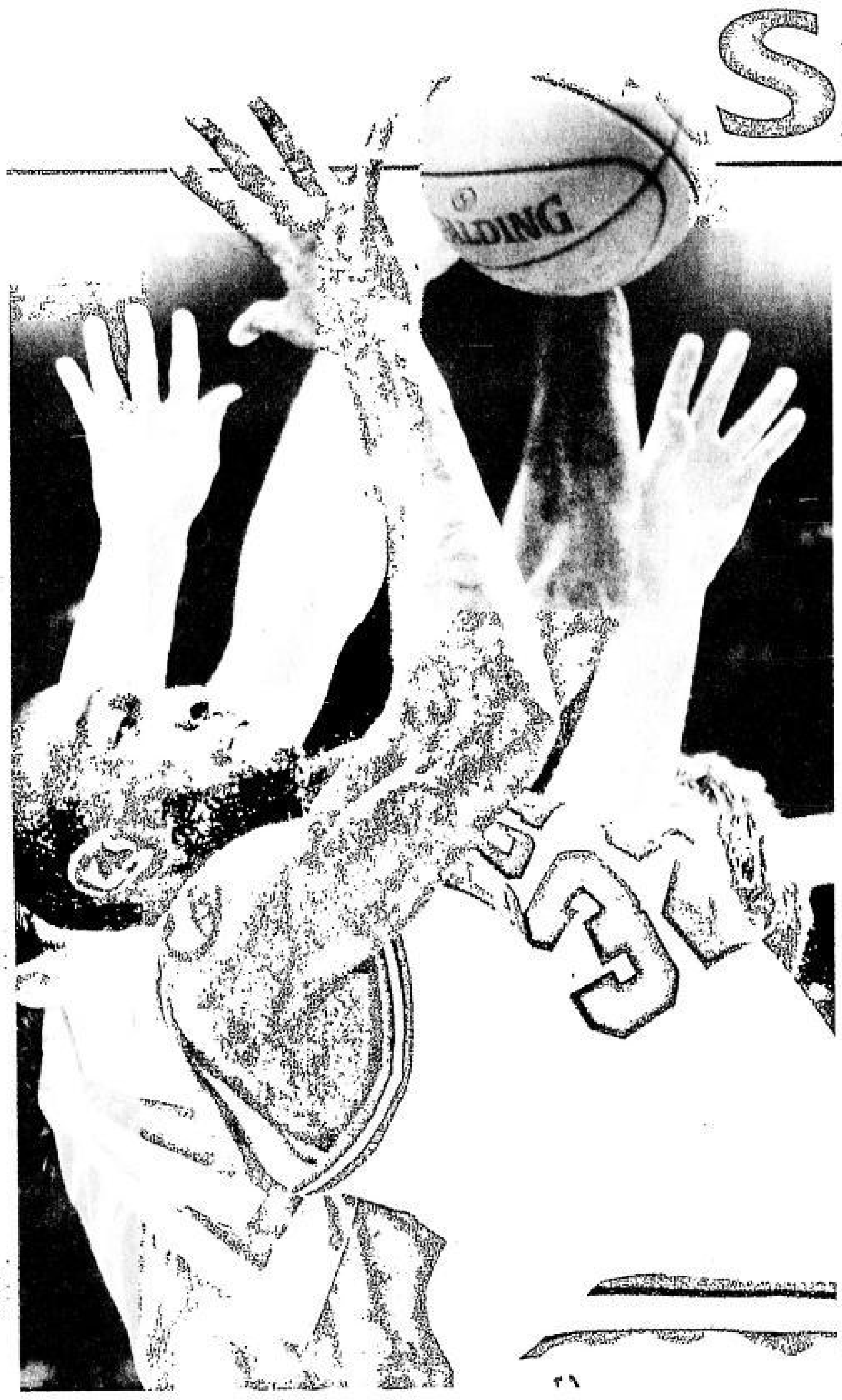


CHICAGO Bulls forward Joe Smith (right) and Houston Rockets forward Luis Scola fight for the rebound in a Dec. 22 match won by the Rockets, 116-98. REUTERS

Tired of losing, Bulls sack coach

DEERFIELD, ILLINOIS—SCOTT SKILES was fired Monday as coach of the Chicago Bulls, who have one of the worst records in the Eastern Conference.

The underachieving Bulls (9-16) have lost three of their last four and were booed throughout by the home crowd during Saturday night's 116-98 loss to the Houston Rockets.

"I felt like something was going to happen," forward Luol Deng said. "I didn't know whether it was players or coaches. But you could definitely feel there was something. It just didn't seem like we were on the same page."

With three straight playoff appearances after a long postseason drought, the Bulls' expectations were soaring. Then, they dropped 10 of their first 12 games and they've been unable to capture the intensity that catapulted them into the second round of the playoffs last season.

They've lacked a consistent inside scoring threat the past few years, and now, their perimeter players are off target.

Chicago is shooting a league-worst 41.3 percent, which partially explains why it hasn't been able to sustain a winning streak.

SKILES: Thrown out AP

"This was a difficult decision to make, but one that was necessary at this time," Bulls general manager John Paxson said in a release. "Scott helped us in many ways during his time with the Bulls; most importantly, he helped this franchise get back to respectability. I am appreciative of his hard work and the imprint that he left on our team."

The Bulls didn't immediately announce a replacement for Skiles, who went 165-172 after replacing Bill Cartwright in November 2003.

Chicago is in a familiar spot with this season's slow start.

The Bulls dropped their first nine in 2004-05 and were 4-15 before going on a surge that led to 47 wins and their first playoff appearance since the Michael Jordan era.

They needed a late surge the next season to make it to the playoffs, winning 12 of their final 14 regular-season games to finish with 41 wins.

And with high expectations following the arrival of Ben Wallace, the Bulls promptly dropped nine of their first 12 last season before turning things around. They wound up with 49 wins and swept Miami to capture a playoff series, then lost in six games to Detroit in the second round.

There were no major acquisitions in the off-season. Instead, the most notable moves were the ones the Bulls did not make—contract extensions for Ben Gordon and Deng and a blockbuster trade for Kobe Bryant.

Deng called Skiles "a great coach" but the effort wasn't there, particularly the past few games. Whether this wakes them up or is just the start of a shake-up remains to be seen.

"It's a lot on our shoulders right now," Deng said.

Skiles and the Bulls nearly parted ways in June 2005. Instead, he agreed to a four-year, $16.5 million contract extension after talking with owner Jerry Reinsdorf. *AP*

With no exemptions, Wie misses first PGA event since 2004

FLORIDA—MICHELLE WIE MIGHT start her 2008 season in Hawaii, but not at the Sony Open.

Wie, who has played the PGA Tour event every year since 2004, did not receive one of the four unrestricted sponsor exemptions, tournament director Ray Stosik said Thursday.

Swing coach David Leadbetter said the 18-year-old from Honolulu likely would ask for exemptions at one or both of the LPGA Tour events in Hawaii that kick off the women's golf season in February. He also said competition against the men would probably be on hold until she gets her health and her game back together.

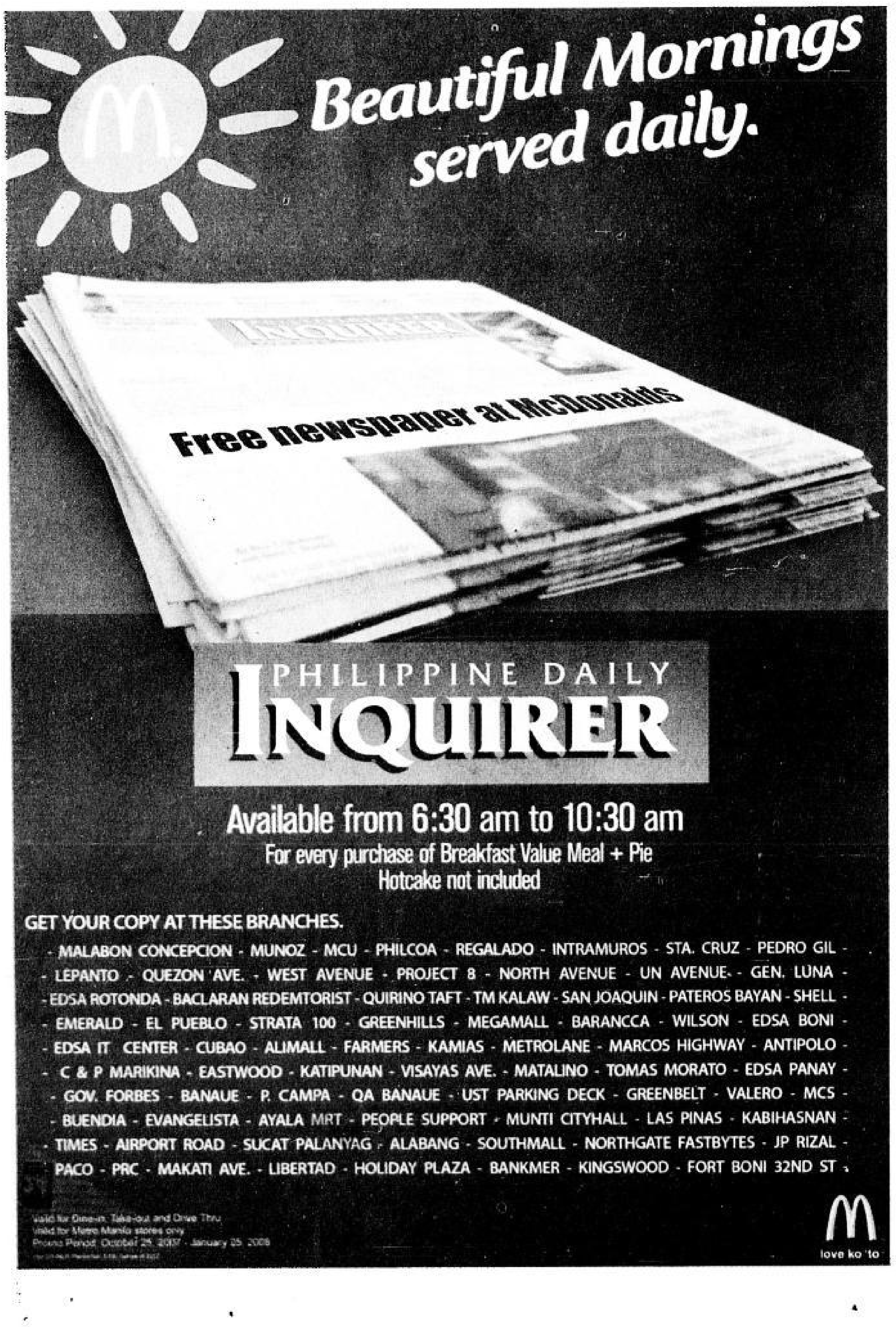
"She's not ready to play in that yet," Leadbetter said of the Sony Open, where Wie first rose to fame by shooting 68 at age 14 and missing the cut by one shot. "Her health is getting better, her game is getting better, the confidence is growing."

"The whole goal is to get back on track after the debacle last year."

The debacle included Wie trying to play despite both wrists being injured. She made only three cuts in nine starts, withdrew twice and only broke par two times. She also endured harsh criticism from Annika Sorenstam, who was angered by Wie pulling out of the Swede's tournament, only to be seen hitting balls on the range at the next tournament.

The Sony Open still will have a couple of teenagers from Hawaii in the tournament that starts Jan. 10.

One exemption went to Tadd Fujikawa, who last year became the youngest player in 50 years to make a cut on the PGA Tour. The other was given to 17-year-old Alex Ching, Wie's former classmate at Punahou School. *AP*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Mirza's wish: Injury-free season

MUMBAI, INDIA—INDIA'S SANIA MIRZA is hoping for an injury-free new year after her 2007 season was cut short due to a series of niggles.

Mirza, 21, achieved a career-high singles ranking of 27 in August, following an impressive run in the US hardcourt circuit when she reached the Stanford Classic final.

But she lost time to injury and a surgery.

"My first goal is to remain injury-free for the year. I lost three-four months (to injuries) last year," Mirza told reporters at a promotional event on Monday.

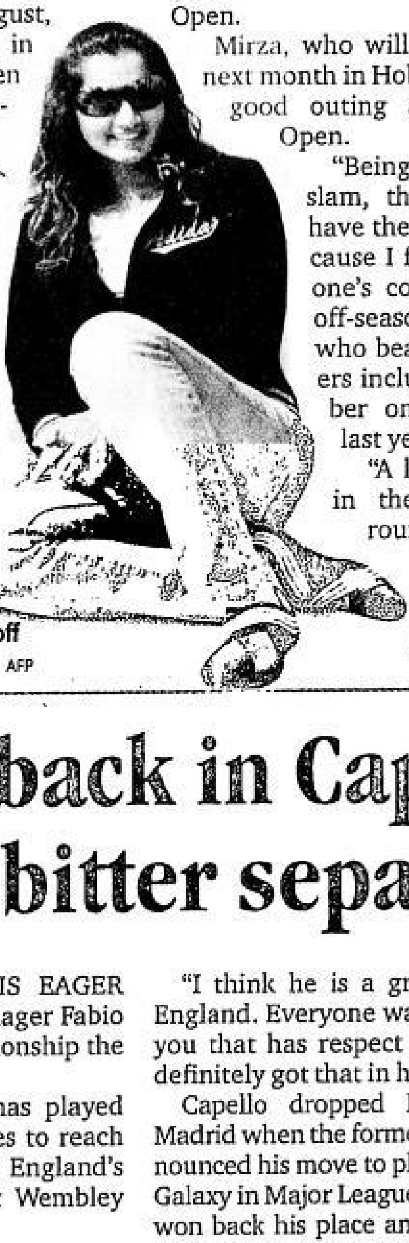
World number 31 Mirza suffered a wrist injury after the US Open, where she reached the third round, and then cut back the season by a couple of weeks following a strained abductor muscle in October.

The Indian number one underwent surgery in March following a ligament injury in her right knee at the Qatar Open.

Mirza, who will be back in action next month in Hobart, is hoping for a good outing at the Australian Open.

"Being the first grand slam, there is where you have the most surprises because I feel because everyone's coming out of their off-season," said Mirza, who beat five top-20 players including former number one Martina Hingis last year.

"A lot of seeds go out in the first couple of rounds," said Mirza who has reached the fourth round of the 2005 US Open. *Reuters*



SANIA Mirza poses on a yacht off the western coast of Mumbai. AFP

Beckham back in Capello's fold after bitter separation

LONDON—DAVID BECKHAM IS EAGER to play under new England manager Fabio Capello despite the stormy relationship the two shared at Real Madrid.

The 32-year-old midfielder has played 99 games for England and hopes to reach his century of appearances in England's friendly against Switzerland at Wembley Stadium on Feb. 6.

"Fabio is one of the managers players I look up to and want to manage them. I hope I'll be part of his plans," Beckham told BBC Radio in an interview to be broadcast on Christmas Day. Excerpts were released by the BBC on Monday.

"I think he is a great appointment for England. Everyone wants someone leading you that has respect and success. He has definitely got that in his career."

Capello dropped Beckham from Real Madrid when the former England captain announced his move to play for the Los Angeles Galaxy in Major League Soccer. But Beckham won back his place and helped Madrid win the Spanish league title last season.

"There were ups and downs with me and the manager at the time but he brought me back into the team and he had the belief in me to put me back in the team," Beckham said. *AP*

IN THIS ISSUE

Bangko Sentral to further cut key policy rates in January, says DBS /B2

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IFC's ₱5-B bond float hits a snag

BIR refuses to exempt securities from taxes

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCE CORP.'S PLAN TO OFFER P5 billion in long-term peso-denominated bonds has hit a snag due to the Bureau of Internal Revenue's refusal to exempt from taxes the securities to be issued by the World Bank's investment banking arm, banking sources said.

The five-year bond float by IFC, which was supposed to be the second triple A-rated supranational institution after the Asian Development Bank to offer peso bonds, was originally planned for issuance last September.

Asked about the tax issue with the BIR, IFC country manager Jesse Ang told reporters: "We're a tax-exempt institution. When ADB issued their bonds in May, they were tax-exempt, so we should be treated similarly."

Banking sources said the BIR, on the other hand, was citing a precedent in the past when the IFC was not tax-exempt.

But the IFC is confident that the BIR would soon issue a favorable ruling on its bond float.

"We have to go through our approval process. We have made our application and talked to the agencies. What we're going through is some verification process," Ang said.

Until the BIR approves the tax exemption, the IFC said the bond float would likely be on hold.

"We are a multilateral institution like the ADB, I think the question here is if an institution like us which is part of the World Bank group, which has a treaty (with the government), shouldn't be tax-exempt," Ang said.

"It's a technicality, so it's up to the government how they will deal with this. But clearly if they acted with precedent with ADB, they will figure it out," he added.

By offering the bonds, Ang said the IFC would provide opportunity for Filipino investors to invest in peso-denominated triple-A bonds.

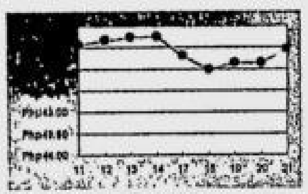
IFC has mandated First Metro Investment Corp. and British bank Standard Chartered to arrange the P5-billion bond float.

FMIC and Standard Chartered also handled the P5-billion five-year bond float of ADB last May. It carried a fixed rate of 5.23 percent a year and was priced at a spread of 31 basis

IFC'S P5-B/ B3

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



DECEMBER

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

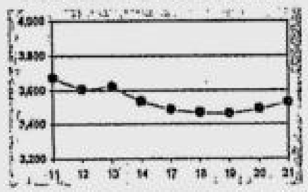
₱41.52 = $1

¥113.13 = $1

As of 5 p.m., Dec. 21, 2007

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



DECEMBER
(See stock market report on Page B6)

Lackluster trade seen

MARKETS REOPEN TODAY AFTER A long holiday break with trading expected to be thin and uneventful throughout the week.

Traders said that aside from some stocks which could rise on window-dressing activities by institutional fund managers, the market is expected to trade within a very narrow range.

Dollar remittances fuel new affluence among Filipinos

By Daxim L. Lucas

(Conclusion)

SPECIAL REPORT

EXPATRIATE FILIPINOS HAVE SO FAR sent home a record-breaking amount of dollar remittances, fueling a spending boom that has permeated almost all sectors of the economy.

According to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), overseas Filipinos workers have sent home $11.9 billion as of the first 10 months of the year. This is expected to rise further to at least $14 billion by yearend.

Including the amount sent home through informal remittance channels, the conservative estimate of OFW funds sent home would stand close to $20 billion by the end of this year—almost 15 percent of the country's gross economic output, which is expected to be worth about $137 billion this year.

Nowhere is this phenomenon more evident than in the country's numerous malls, which have been packed with holiday shoppers in recent weeks.

"Sales have really been strong for us this year," said Jeffrey C. Lim, the chief financial officer of SM Prime Holdings Inc., the company which runs the country's biggest chain of shopping malls.

In an interview, Lim said that same store sales in the various SM malls have so far shown a 7-percent increase on the average, surpassing sales reported in recent years.

"This is a very good figure for us," he said, adding that this report has yet to factor in sales from the previous weekend, when shopping was expected to peak ahead of Christmas Day.

"We are still looking at the numbers, but for certain, [sales] will be stronger than last year's," Lim said.

According to the latest BSP survey, food and household needs continued to dominate the share of spending of consumers in general, but more so in the case of OFWs' local beneficiaries.

So-called "consumer durables" like appliances also rank high on the list—a fact that is not lost on mall operator SM.

"During these times, it is really the food [segment] that does very well," Lim said. "When people go shopping, they also eat."

While value-for-money shopping has always been a strong theme for SM, Lim noted that the growing affluence has also resulted in stronger sales for many of the higher-end retailers in the malls.

"Many high-end stores at the Mall of Asia, for example, are doing very well," he said. "I guess [sales are] increasing across the board."

DOLLAR/ B3

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PGA Cars

PNOC seen pursuing more hydro projects

By Abigail L. Ho

STATE-RUN PHILIPPINE NATIONAL OIL Co. is actively pursuing various hydropower projects all over the country, in an effort to help the country achieve 60-percent energy self-sufficiency by 2010.

PNOC president Antonio Cailao said the state firm was looking at developing some 263.9 megawatts (MW) in total hydropower potential.

The prospective hydropower project sites include Paracelis in the Mountain Province with a potential of 3.5 MW; Pasil-Kalinga in Kalinga, 18 MW; Diadigasan, 40 MW; Bulanog-Batang, 150 MW; Timbahan in Aklan, 23.5 MW; Villasiga in Antique, 16.5 MW; and Langogan, 5.6 MW and Babuyan, 6.8 MW both in Palawan.

Two of the potential hydropower sites, Cailao said, were now ready for development.

Aklan Rep. Florencio Miraflores had filed House Bill No. 5705, which allowed the development of the proposed Timbahan project in the area.

The bill is now under review by the House of the Representatives.

The Villasiga project is also on the development stage, with PNOC coordinating with Vergel Consult for the submission of project proponent K-Water's formal intent or proposal for the project.

PNOC had already sent a project profile and status of the project to the Department of Energy, Cailao said.

Earlier in the year, PNOC signed a memorandum of agreement with the Northern Mindanao Electric Cooperative Association (Normeca), which formalized a technical alliance that would facilitate the development of the $245-million Bulanog-Batang hydropower project in Bukidnon.

Under the agreement, the two parties will jointly review the potential of the Bulanog and Batang rivers as viable sources of hydroelectric power.

PNOC is also reviewing the feasibility of the Langogan and Babuyan hydropower sites in Palawan.

Right now, the country's total hydropower capacity is placed at 3,342.76 MW.

The total capacity is composed of 3,253.16 MW from 21 large-hydro plants, 89.07 MW from 52 mini-hydro facilities, and 0.56 MW from 61 micro-hydro plants.

Pacific Online posts 16% sales growth to ₱430M

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

LOTTERY EQUIPMENT SUPPLIER PACIFIC Online Systems Corp. said it had generated total sales of P430 million from January to November, up 16 percent from year-ago level.

This represents Pacific Online's share in the total sales of state-owned Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office in the Visayas and Mindanao, which stood at P4.3 billion in the first 11 months of the year.

Pacific Online is the exclusive online lottery system provider of PCSO in the Visayas and Mindanao.

Company chair Willy Ocier said the 11-month performance would bring Pacific Online's net income to P150 million this year, higher than the P50 million posted in 2006.

With the expected robust December sales, the full-year revenue is seen to rise by 20 percent from last year. The company's optimism was fueled by the recent roll out of new online lottery terminals and introduction of new digit games.

Lucky Circle Corp., a wholly owned indirect subsidiary, and its "Instant Scratch" lottery cards are performing strongly nationwide, said Ocier.

Last July, Pacific Online launched the marketing and distribution of PCSO's "Instant Scratch It Lottery Tickets."

Two months later, the company bought Lucky Circle Corp., the exclusive lotto operator in SM Supermalls nationwide.

Bangko Sentral to further cut key policy rates in January, says DBS

Recent reduction seen not enough to stem sharp rise of peso

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS may be forced to further cut its key policy rates in January in view of the strong peso's dampening effects on the economy, according to investment bank DBS.

DBS, in a paper, said the recent cut in the central bank's key policy rates might not be enough to stem the sharp rise of the local currency.

"Peso appreciation helps to lessen the pain of higher crude oil prices. But the other edge of the sword is far sharper, as peso appreciation takes a direct toll on the economy's two key pillars—consumer spending and exports—by eating into the remitted earnings of overseas foreign workers and by hurting export competitiveness," it said.

In a paper entitled "Economics Markets Strategy," the research group of DBS said the BSP rates would likely be slashed further to 5 percent and 7 percent for the overnight borrowing and lending, respectively, from 5.25 percent and 7.25 percent.

Lower interest rates discourage the substantial entry of foreign portfolio investments, thereby easing the buildup of the country's dollar holdings. This, in turn, will temper the peso's rise.

Last week, the BSP cut its key policy rates for the fourth time this year by 25 basis points.

In the meantime, DBS expects the economy to grow by 6.6 percent next year, slowing down from its projected economic growth of 6.9 percent this year. Its growth forecast was less optimistic than the government's target of 6.3 to 7 percent for 2008.

The investment bank's growth projection took into consideration the ill-effects of a strong peso on household consumption and exports.

It said that in the first three quarters of the year, remittances sent by OFWs grew by 15 percent year-on-year in dollar terms. But in peso terms, it said the growth was only 4.4 percent due to the strengthening of the peso.

DBS said the growth in the peso value of the remittances was just a bit faster than the 3.2-percent inflation rate. This scenario does not encourage aggressive household spending, the bank said.

It said consumer spending next year would likely just match the 5.7-percent growth expected this year—that is if the BSP's monetary policy would be more accommodating than the current. If not, growth in consumer spending would be slower.

With regard to exports, DBS said growth would likely hit only 3 percent next year, much lower than the government's 8-percent target. The bank's 2008 forecast for exports growth, however, is higher than its projection of only 1.3 percent for this year.

"One comfort, however, is that exports may be less vulnerable than consumers to the vagaries of the peso, since a significant chunk of the country's exports now go to Asia, which has experienced similar currency strengthening, albeit to a lesser degree," DBS said.

It noted that besides the strong peso, the exports sector was also disadvantaged by the easing of the growth in global demand, partly due the slowdown of the US economy—the Philippines' biggest export market.

AGRICULTURE Secretary Arthur C. Yap tours the Pangasinan Tropical Fruits Multipurpose Cooperative (PTFMPC) processing and packaging plant in Barangay Matulong, Manaoag, Pangasinan, with Lito M. Arenas (left), owner of L.A. Trading and chair of PTFMPC.

What will the Senate do with Senator Trillanes

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honesto C. General

THE WORD "SENATE" COMES from the Latin *senatus* derived from *senes*, which means "elders." In Ancient Rome, the Senate, or Council of Elders, served as advisers, first to the King, then later the republican magistrates. Upon the establishment of the Republic, the Senate, in which the patrician elders sat for life, dominated the State.

The Senate eventually consisted of 300 men recruited from most of the Republic. It was difficult for a presiding consul, or even the Emperor, to initiate important government policy, especially foreign policy, without seeking advice from the Senate. And having asked the advice, he was morally bound by it.

Our American colonizers transplanted into the Philippines their presidential system that broke up the monopoly of power in a parliamentary system. In the presidential system, power is shared by the executive and legislative departments. Then, the latter is further divided into the House of Representatives and the Senate.

The representatives are elected by districts. We are the only country in the whole, wide world that elects senators at large. A new addition is the party list system.

With only 24 members, each serving a six-year term, maximum of two consecutive terms, the Senate is the country's most exclusive club.

President Quezon planned the Senate as a breeding ground for future presidents. He was quite a visionary. Of our 13 presidents, 10 (Quezon, Laurel, Osmeña, Roxas, Quirino, Garcia, Macapagal, Marcos, Estrada and Arroyo) ascended to the presidency directly from the Senate. The non-senators, Magsaysay, Aquino and Ramos are the exceptions that prove the rule. This is why, for some ambitious politicians, the Senate is seen as a springboard to Malacañang.

The rolls of senators include such illustrious names as Recto and Tañada. Jovito Salonga is considered the best president we never had.

Now comes Senator Antonio Trillanes IV. While in police detention accused on trial in a civilian court on a capital offense for leading the Oakwood military mutiny 4 years ago, he ran on the opposition slate and won a Senate seat, garnering over 11 million votes. We can wait a long time, but we will not see another phenomenon like him.

His feat should have moved Trillanes to humility. If he thanked those who voted for him and concentrated on his defense, he probably would have gained more sympathy.

Also, had he kept quiet, he would have followed the age-old unwritten rule that a lawmaker should stay in the sidelines during the first year of his term. A newcomer does not upstage the old-timers in the public eye.

Acting less and less like a senator of the realm, Trillanes walked out of the trial court during a hearing. Even his own counsel was caught off guard. Trillanes did not just insult the judge who was robed with full authority to apply the rule of law and give everyone a fair trial. He thumbed his nose at the judicial system and the entire Filipino people.

Finally, Trillanes and his buddy, Brigadier General Lim, marched 2 kilometers to Peninsula Hotel and called for an uprising. Everybody was invited to the party, but nobody came.

In a few hours, the ill-conceived rebellion was crushed. What will the Senate do with a member that has disgraced one our most cherished institutions?

Bangko Sentral relaxes rules on derivatives

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS has approved a set of guidelines liberalizing the use of derivatives or hedging instruments to provide banks with expanded opportunities for financial risk management and investment diversification.

The BSP's policymaking Monetary Board approved last week a more liberal framework but still required different levels of licensing for those wishing to handle derivatives and structured products beyond the simple or plain-vanilla instruments, central bank sources said.

The sources said the BSP would determine how sophisticated an applicant-bank was and issue licenses based on the array of products it could handle.

"There are levels of discipline because the Monetary Board does not want all of them taking aggressive positions because these are what caused heavy losses (for many big banks) in the US subprime crisis," the source said.

The following are the different types of authority or licenses for handling derivatives:

- Expanded dealer authority—given to banks with comprehensive and integrated risk management and sales practices that are deemed appropriate and adequate for the level of derivative activities;
- Limited dealer authority—for banks wishing to operate only as dealers of specific derivatives products;
- Expanded user authority—for those wishing to be end-users of a wider array of financial derivatives; and
- Limited user authority—for those who want to be an end-user of specific derivatives.

In the past, banks would have to seek MB clearance for longer-term derivative contracts.

A derivative is a financial instrument that derives its value primarily from the performance of an underlying variable. Its value changes in response to the change in the underlying commodity or index such as interest rate; price of a financial asset; foreign exchange rate; indices of financial asset prices, or interest rate or foreign exchange rates; or credit rating or credit index.

Financial derivative activities also include transactions in cash instruments with embedded derivatives that reshape the risk-return pattern, such as credit-linked notes and other structured products

After easing restrictions on foreign exchange trading and beefing up its own mopping up tools, the BSP liberalized the use of hedging mechanisms as another way of dismantling barriers to outward flow of capital since financial institutions would be more confident of exploring fresh investment opportunities once armed with a wider array of hedging tools.

Measures to mitigate adverse effects of strong peso pushed

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE PHILIPPINE EXporters Confederation is pushing for more measures that would mitigate the negative effects of the continued appreciation of the peso on the very sectors that bring in foreign currency.

Philexport president Sergio Ortiz-Luis Jr. said in an interview the group was calling for the exemption of exporters from the value-added tax when they buy raw materials.

"We are also supporting a proposal made by Sen. Mar Roxas II that the VAT on petroleum products be lifted for at least six months," Ortiz-Luis said.

He added that Philexport was reiterating calls for the government to consider prepaying foreign loans "in a more serious manner."

"Another step that could be taken is to refrain from foreign borrowings," Ortiz-Luis said. "From just 70 percent of total borrowings, we could make all borrowings domestically."

Further, he said Philexport officials had engaged in lengthy discussion with counterparts from the Philippine Stock Exchange, Development Bank of the Philippines and the House of Representative's committee on trade and industry about allowing local investors to buy shares in companies that were not listed in the local bourse.

"This can be made through depository receipts which could help siphon off excess dollars circulating in the local market," Ortiz-Luis explained.

He said the use of DRs had to be facilitated considering that a dollar bourse under the PSE had been found impractical.

He added that trading through DRs could become part of the functions of the PSE, with stock brokers and fund managers playing roles in the transactions.

In an interview last November, Ortiz-Luis said the government should intervene to stop the continued appreciation of the peso amid fresh forecasts that showed the local currency would further strengthen in the coming years.

He said there was still a lot that the government could do to address the trend that adversely affect families of overseas Filipino workers and those whose livelihood depend on exports.

Ortiz-Luis, who is also vice chair of the Export Development Council, said the government could choose to peg the exchange rate to P47 to the dollar.

The economy could afford a 10-percent depreciation of the peso to 47:$1, which would result to a marginal increase in inflation of 1.2 percent, he said.

Its debt in decline, gov't saved ₱32B in 1st 11 mos

From January to November, spending reached a total of P1.032 trillion

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT SAVED P32 billion in the first 11 months of the year, as low interest rates and a strong peso allowed it to pay less-than-programmed interest on maturing liabilities.

According to the Department of Finance, the low-interest-rate environment and sharp rise of the peso have propped up the government's financial condition.

DOF data showed that the government's total spending from January to November reached P1.032 trillion. A part of it went to covered payments for interest on maturing obligations.

The amount could have been P32 billion higher had interests and foreign exchange settled at the rates expected by economic managers when they drafted this year's budget program.

The lower-than-expected interest rates meant the government would spend less for interest payments, both for domestic and foreign loans.

On the other hand, the appreciation of the peso trimmed the government's foreign-currency denominated debts in peso terms.

Under the 2007 budget program, the 91-day Treasury bill rate was assumed to settle at an average of 4 to 4.5 percent.

But actual average for the three-month debt paper stood at only 3.4 percent.

Also, the peso was supposed to reach an average of 47 to 49 against the US dollar. But it averaged 42.798 during the period.

The lower-than-programmed spending for interest payments helped government to attain a budget surplus in the first 11 months of the year.

The 12.6-billion surplus as of November bolstered expectations that the government will attain a balanced budget, if not a surplus, for the full year of 2007—a year ahead of the 2008 schedule.

Finance officials said the low interest rate environment was due to improved macroeconomic indicators that improved the government's credit image.

Low interest rates are also expected to spur more investments next year, they added.

The appreciation of the peso, on the other hand, was due to the huge dollar inflows in the form of remittances and investments.

The peso has been one of the strongest Asian currencies so far this year.

Besides the lower-than-programmed spending, higher-than-target revenues from privatization also helped attain the surplus in the first 11 months.

The government raised a total P90 billion from asset sale this year, much higher than the target of only P25 billion. The government worked on raising privatization revenues more than what was programmed to compensate for the shortfall in tax collection.

Key government assets sold this year was the 80-percent stake in PNOC-Energy Development Corp. and the 46-percent stake in Philippine Telecommunications Investments Corp.

Telcos brace for holiday network traffic

CELLULAR NETWORK OPERATORS Smart Communications Inc., Globe Telecom Inc. and Sun Cellular said they were on red alert for the holiday rush of messages and advised subscribers to avoid joining the "traffic jam" of messages toward midnight of Dec. 31.

"The surge of text messages and calls really peak on the 31st (of December) and there is a greater tendency to bunch up toward midnight. The activity is more dispersed around Dec. 24 and 25," Smart spokesperson Ramon Isberto said in a phone interview.

"The traffic traditionally doubles around New Year's Eve. We have close to 50 million subscribers between the cellular providers Globe, Smart and Sun. Imagine if all of them text at the same time," added Globe spokesperson Jones Campos.

Smart, Globe and Sun said they currently have network operations and mobile crews on standby until Jan. 2 or Jan. 3, depending on the traffic.

"We have our technical group on 24/7 duty," Sun Cellular senior vice president for legal affairs William Pamintuan said.

Isberto and Campos said their respective personnel were also on standby 24/7.

Constant monitoring is important because network traffic is not just coming from Metro Manila, Isberto said.

"The pattern changes a little every year, depending on where mobile phone takeup increases, how long the holiday is and where people spend their free time. This year, we have a long holiday and there will likely be a lot of traffic outside Metro Manila, especially Central and Southern Luzon," Isberto said.

"We are monitoring network traffic all day so we can reroute calls going to clogged parts of the network, and if there is a physical problem, we have ready crews for deployment," he added.

Nevertheless, texters would do well to avoid the New Year's Eve rush.

"If the networks get clogged, your text message may reach the recipient on New Year's day anyway. Texters can avoid frustration by texting on Jan. 1 or much earlier than midnight of Dec. 31," Campos said.

Riza T. Olchondra

In 2007, yield of fisheries sector expected to reach 4.9 million MT

By Amy R. Remo

THE BUREAU OF FISHeries and Aquatic Resources said it was confident of hitting an 8-percent growth for the fisheries sector in 2007, with output seen reaching as much as 4.9 million metric tons.

In an interview, BFAR Director Malcolm I. Sarmiento Jr. said the aquaculture subsector, which accounts for close to half of the local fisheries sector, would most likely be the main growth driver this year.

Sarmiento said aquaculture may grow by as much 15 percent, as the bureau had pushed for the establishment of more mariculture parks and hatcheries this year.

"With aquaculture's sustained growth, BFAR expects total fisheries production to reach as much as 5.3 million metric tons in 2008," he said.

Last year, the fisheries sector registered the biggest gain among farm subsectors at 6.31 percent, with production hitting 4.4 million metric tons.

The fisheries sector accounted for 24.92 percent of the total agriculture output in 2006, with gross earnings amounting to P163.4 billion.

To add to the output this year, BFAR jumpstarted the breeding of Pangasius, a freshwater species of catfish which enjoys huge demand from hotels and high-end restaurants, and the Pacific white shrimp, to revive the once robust local shrimp industry.

Earlier, Sarmiento said the industry could produce five million metric tons if the government would allot an additional P170 million and that there would be no natural disasters or disease outbreaks.

"The additional budget would be used mostly for production enhancement and hunger mitigation projects," he said.

The bureau's programs include setting up more mariculture parks, from the current 25, mostly in the Visayas.

To date, the Philippines is the eighth largest fish producer in the world, contributing to the total global production of 146.27 million MT, based on statistics from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Tuna is the country's top export product and is shipped to many parts of the world including the United States, Japan, China and the European Union.

The Philippines is also the world's second largest producer of seaweeds, with production reaching 1.39 million MT or 11.6 percent of the total world production of 12 million MT.

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In Pesos	Less than 1 Year	1 Year
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10.0MM and up	5.00	5.00

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Transport officials consider replacing Naia 3 contractor

By Riza T. Olchondra

THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION and Communication (DOTC) has fired Takenaka Corp. from the Ninoy Aquino International Airport terminal 3 (Naia 3) project for failing to complete its work.

But the termination may not be permanent as DOTC Secretary Leandro Mendoza said Takenaka is asking for another chance.

"They submitted a letter of reconsideration," he told reporters. "Miaa (Manila International Airport Authority) is studying it."

Mendoza said that, in the meantime, DOTC is looking for other contractors to undertake the retrofit and finish the airport construction.

The department has not set a timetable for the project's completion.

"Actually, it's not really a matter of targets anymore," Mendoza said. "What is important is to make it very, very safe."

Takenaka has not finished 2 percent of the airport construction project because it halted work when a legal battle for ownership of Naia 3 broke out.

The government took over the terminal in December 2005 from project proponent Philippine International Air Terminals Co. (Piatco).

This, after the Supreme Court declared Piatco's original build-operate-transfer contract for the terminal null and disadvantageous to the government due to onerous changes made to the original contract.

The situation was compounded when part of the ceiling in the main terminal building collapsed in April 2006.

Miaa contracted foreign experts Ove Arup and TCGI to check the structure and they recommended the postponement of plans to open Naia 3 after finding serious structural defects.

Takenaka disagreed with some of the findings of Ove Arup and TCGI.

Negotiations for the remaining work has progressed at a snail's pace since then.

IFC's ₱5-B bond float hits ...

From page B1

points over the tax-adjusted five-year Philippine treasury bonds.

Local investors and regulators welcome a domestic issuance by supranational institutions as this implies a vote of confidence on the country's domestic capital markets. There is also a huge demand for IOUs issued by triple A-rated institutions.

The ADB, for instance, was supposed to issue only P2.5 billion last May but ended up doubling its offering size due to strong market demand. The ADB offering was oversubscribed by 1.4 times.

Since early 2004, the ADB has completed market-opening transactions in the region's local currency bond markets, including India, Malaysia, People's Republic of China and Thailand. The proceeds of the bond issue will be part of ADB's ordinary capital resources and will be used in its nonconcessional operations.

IFC's plan to issue domestic bonds is thus seen as another step that will contribute to local capital market development.

Liquidity in the local bond market has greatly improved, allowing supranational issuers to price their bonds reasonably, following the government's ongoing program to weed out dormant tenors and replacing them with more actively traded terms.

Dollar remittances fuel ...

From page B1

Lim is hesitant to attribute the entire phenomenon to OFW remittances, but cited anecdotal evidence that the massive dollar inflows experienced this year are giving Filipinos the ability buy more expensive items.

"One important indicator is the activity at the foreign exchange counters in the malls," he said. "We can see that the lines are always long and that people are always exchanging dollars [for pesos]."

BSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo acknowledges that many Filipinos now feel more affluent with the surge in dollars sent home from abroad.

He is worried that so much money is being spent on consumption, but he is also hopeful that Filipinos are starting to look toward the longer-term future—as evidenced by rising savings and investment in real estate.

"We also see people allocating more for education, and for me, this is also an investment," he said. "People should not only spend. They should also save."

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Things to do in 2008

MY DRIFT

Andre Palma

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS ARE wonderful things. Despite the fact that I've been unable to keep any of the resolutions I've ever made since childhood, new ones are still made each and every year. In what looks like a continuous exercise in futility, resolutions aren't really about enforcing binding contracts—resolutions are about hope.

Each year brings the possibility of change for the better; however the plot may play out. So here's a list of things that have to be done in the coming year, that somehow my little world of cars and driving becomes just a wee bit wider.

A need to look beyond

There is a need to look beyond the major brands for value-laden automobiles. Everyone in the beat will easily cover all the significant launches from the major players. Yet there are cars out there from the smaller, second-line manufacturers that could possibly be good, solid products.

Kia's Carens CRDi looks promising. Hyundai's new Elantra diesel might be worth a long look. Heck, even Ssangyong might have a surprise up its sleeve. If that last statement doesn't show just how much I'm trying then I don't know what will.

More stressful, dangerous

Driving around the city on our daily commutes easily makes up 90 percent of the time motorists spend behind the wheel. Sadly, this is a segment of our driving lives that is becoming more stressful and dangerous.

New regulations and traffic schemes from the authorities catch us by surprise, often allowing some unscrupulous elements new venues for revenue collection. Even some of the congestion reduction schemes seem to have backfired, effectively reducing our main thoroughfares' number of lanes. We the motoring public should speak so we can be heard by those who make the decisions about these things.

The underbone scourge grows as hundreds of thousands, if not millions of these cheap motorcycles are added to the streets every year. Worse still is the rise of unregulated and unlicensed short hop underbone taxis in areas without effective public transportation coverage. This is truly scary.

Add these to the already lethal mix of the average untrained and undisciplined underbone rider and it's no wonder sources tell me that an average of a dozen underbone riders are killed on Metro Manila streets on a daily basis. Something needs to be done; these things need to be talked about in the open so someone in a position of authority can start saving lives.

On a lighter, more personal note, there is a need to diversify my own drive. Ever since the beginning of this column, one of the main aims has been to try and put you the reader behind the wheel of significant driving experiences. Sadly this is limited by the author's own driving experience.

The solution comes in expanding the driving horizon so to speak, of trying new things in order to bring the reader a deeper, richer experience. Three particular disciplines call out to me. The flash and brash world of drift is tempting with all the sideways action and the tire smoke. Four-wheel-drive trailing, going way beyond where the pavement ends into the heart of nature, has its appeal.

A slight possibility

In rally raiding though, the long distance point A to point B racing similar to the legendary Dakar top the list. Cross your fingers and toes as you read this as there is a slight possibility that this writer might score a pay drive with a works team in a Southeast Asian leg of a Regional Rally Raid Series. I've packed my gear and written out my will in anticipation. Rest assured that you, the reader, will be along for the ride, in a rally prepped T-class pickup likely, if everything pans out.

So there it is ladies and gentlemen, a short list of things that have to be done and quite a few things that just need to be done. Again, in New Year's resolutions we hope for things to become better, for life to show us a pair of aces instead of deuces. It is only by personal effort though that our wishes will come to pass. Change starts with the individual as they say. Happy holidays to you and your loved ones, dear readers. Let us hope that we all have much more to look forward to in 2008.

PINOY MOTORSPORTS CELEBS

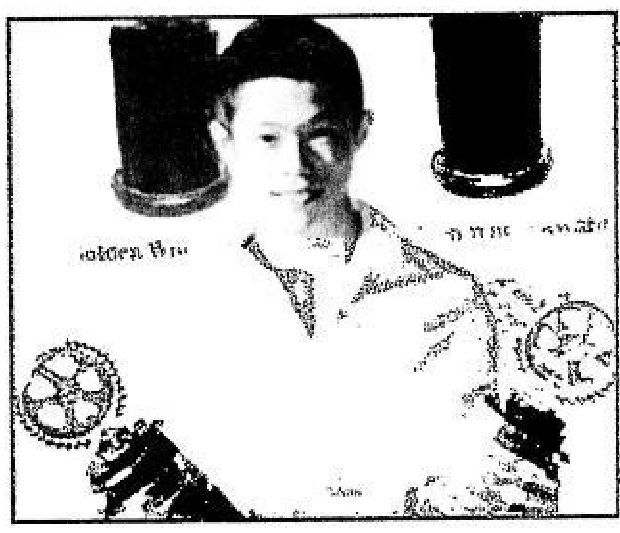
Christmas wishes, New Year's resolutions

Compiled by Tessa R. Salazar

(First of two parts)

HOW TIME RACES BY! This year's movers and shakers on the tracks may have crossed finish lines first so many times, but these overachievers, like what Mick Jagger sings, just "can't get no satisfaction."

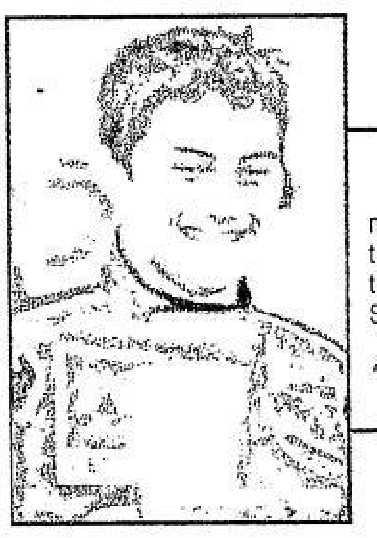
At this end-of-the-year pit stop for INQUIRER Motoring is a glimpse of what our homegrown motorsports heroes have set their sights on for 2008.



"This Christmas and the coming year, I wish that the Tyson Sy Foundation will be able to continue its medical missions and assistance to the poor. (My New Year's resolution) is to have a better attitude as a person and a race driver. I also want to win a championship next year."
— **Tyson Sy, 20,** *2006 Philippine National Formula Three Champion, Golden Wheel International Motorsports Driver of the Year, Asian Formula Three Driver of the Year and Best Asian Driver in the 2007 Star Mazda Championship*

"I wish that my parents will be blessed with good health and prosperity because they make my dreams come true. I also wish that I get to the Formula Atlantics soon where my team—Newman Wachs—has been trying to achieve. (Resolution) To be a better listener and driver."
— **Michele Bumgarner, 18,** *The "Queen" of Asian Karting and international Formula race driver.*

"To be able to race in Formula Ford and Drifting. (My resolution) To spread the advocacy for road safety and also be able to clinch a championship."
— **Pia Boren, 25,** *2004 Ford Lynx Cup champion and lady drifter*



"I wish to get more sponsors for me and my sister Michele. (Resolution) To be the best Filipino driver in the Asian Formula Renault China Series."
— **Mark Bumgarner, 16,** *the "Prince" of Philippine Karting*

"I wish to get the scholarship from BMW Asia. (Resolution) Manage my studies and racing career better and learn from other international drivers."
— **Marlon Stockinger, 16,** *3-time Philippine Rotax Max champ and 1st Filipino to land in the top 10 in the 2007 World Karting Championship*

Sexy toughies

From page B8

Safety enhanced

Honda's own G-Force Control Technology, introduced in 1998, also brings the crash safety performance of Honda cars to the highest standards in the world.

Not only will this provide a crush-proof survival zone for the passenger but the G-Force control technology also protect vulnerable road users, like cyclists, motorcyclists and pedestrians, during a crash.

This technology also enhances the other safety features inside the all-new CR-V including the dual supplementary restraint system and side airbag, occupant position detection system (which intelligently detects weight, height, and positioning of the front passenger as to whether deploy the airbags or not).

Raw power

Not to be outdone, Mitsubishi made sure they also have a formidable contender in their all-new Mitsubishi Outlander.

This four-wheel-drive sprinter is powered by a sprightly and high-revving 220 horsepower 3.0-liter and all-aluminum engine.

Driving the all-new Outlander is more fun than you might expect, as its well-tuned chassis gives it sporty reflexes around corners and transmits considerable feedback to the driver.

Once revved up, the Mivec (that's short for Mitsubishi innovative valve-timing electronic control system) engine moves the all-new Outlander along powerfully and confidently.

Shift from the 6-speed automatic transmission with manual shift gate (Invecs II with Sportronic) and magnesium alloy paddle shifters on the steering wheel was quick, and the sport shifter offered an option to drive with a bit more spirited attitude than is appropriate for a family SUV.

Perfect family vehicle

Not just for spirited driving, the all-new Outlander could also be a perfect family vehicle.

This P1.688 million compact SUV is bigger than most of its counterpart with its 4.64 meters (length) x 1.8 m (width) x 1.72 m (height) dimension.

This dimension is much appreciated once inside: seat spacing is comfortable and the back has a huge cargo space measuring 13 cubic feet.

Unlike other SUVs, the all-new Outlander's "flap-fold" tailgate is divided, with 70 percent a liftgate and the remainder either a fold-down tailgate or short bulkhead.

In either case, each segment's weight is lighter than a pickup's tailgate or full-size lift gate, which is perfect for those who just want to quickly dump their groceries and other belongings at the back.

Of course, for larger packages that require a wider opening, dropping the mini tailgate is just a swift, simple and lightweight chore.

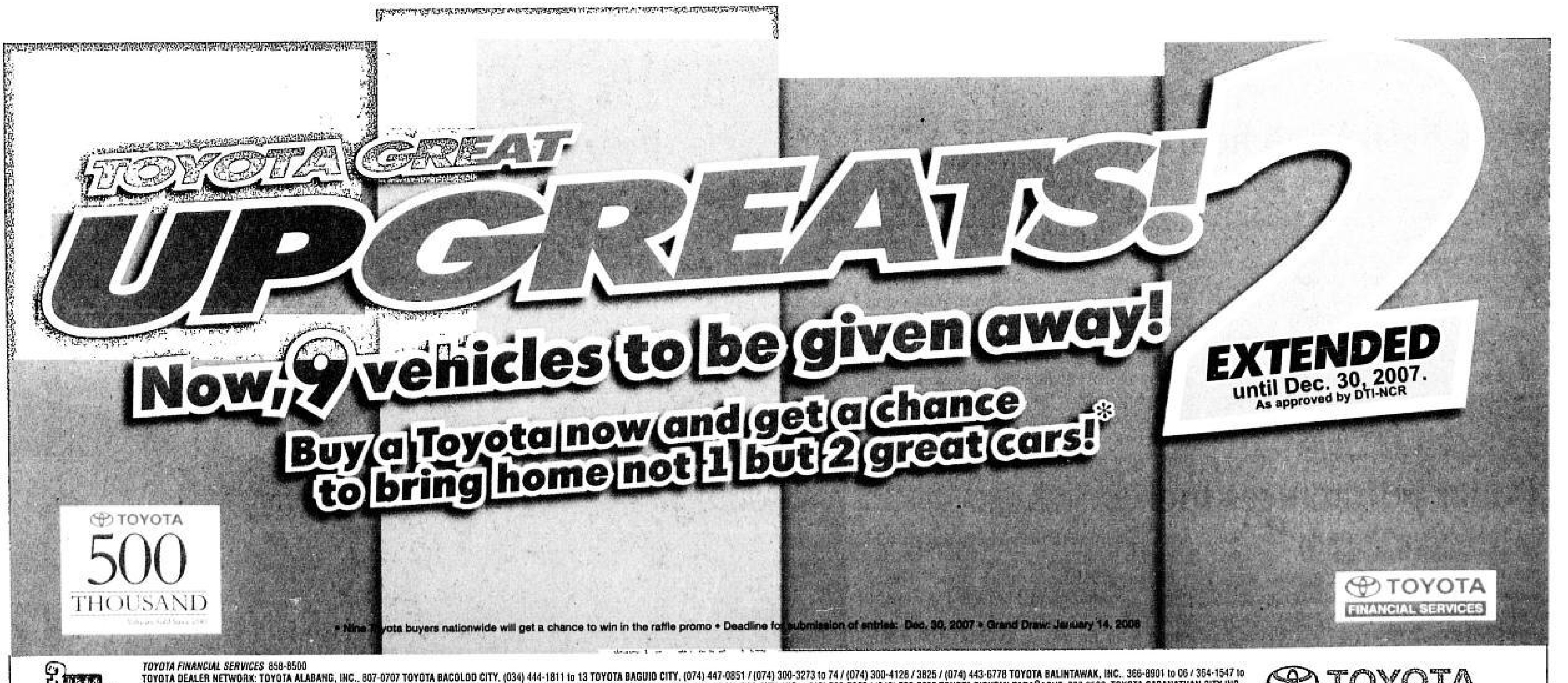
Rockford Fosgate

Still confused as to what crossover or SUV to buy? Then the all-new Outlander's tailored 650-watt Rockford Fosgate sound system should probably do it.

Its six in-dash CD/MP3/Tuner with nine speakers, including a rear 10-inch subwoofer, promises to beat any manufacturer-supplied audio system.

Aside from the all-new Outlander, only the Endeavor, Mitsubishi's mid-sized SUV, is privileged to be equipped with a Rockford Fosgate sound system.

According to Mitsubishi Motors Philippines Corp., such total redesign aimed the all-new Outlander further in the upscale level.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TOYOTA moving forward

TRANSPORT TRIVIA

By Emman Cena

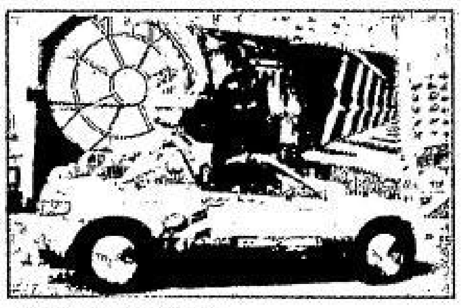
Cars go artsy fartsy

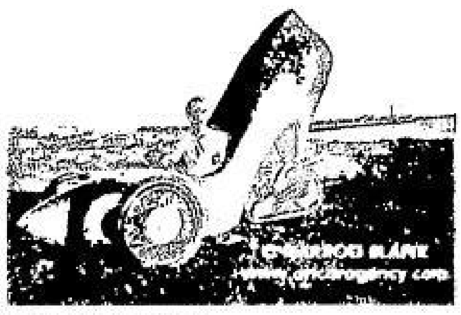
WHILE EVERYONE HEADS TO AND glams up for many holiday parties, a number of cars do not lag behind in the fashion department. In fact, vehicles in some parts of the world have been transformed drastically, and quirky, by their owners for personal artistic expression. They are called art cars.

According to eccentricamerica.com, an art car is a vehicle whose appearance is modified by owners, sometimes referred to as "Cartists." These art car artists or owners often dress in a matching motif when displaying their cars.

Most car artists are ordinary people with no artistic training, mostly self-taught and self-funded, though some are mainstream artists like Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol. The two have designed BMW Art Cars and their works have been reflected in racing cars like the BMW V12 LMR.

Art cars are unique in that no art car is "bad" or "wrong," enthusiasts say. They range from simply painted to complete bodies constructed from the ground up. For painted cars, one-shot sign enamel is a favorite due to its bright colors and high durability. Other artists have used everything from professional artists' oil paint to children's poster paint.


A SCI-FI ART CAR


A SHOE ART CAR

Here are some of the samples of art cars which drew crowds in many car shows, according to art car enthusiasts:

The "Ambulance to the Future," by Peter Lochren, has an alien recovering in an oxygen chamber on the roof. Its sides are painted with underwater, robotic alien scenes, and he and his co-pilot always wear matching protective gear.

Artist Jan Elftmann saved over 20,000 corks while working as a waitress to make her "Cork Truck." She has a dress to match. "Danger," by Rev. Charles Linville (and his dog) is covered with everything that is bad for anyone—from hazardous industrial equipment to red meat.

Some cars simply reflect their owner's quirky personalities. The "Graffiti Beamer" by Marilyn Dreampeace, invites you to play on her car that is covered with interactive musical toys. The "Duke," by Rick McKinney, transformed an old 1970s car, with antique trunks, a typewriter (reflecting his career as a writer) and tons of beads.

The art car community became more cohesive in the 1990s, on the spur of movies and books with a wide underground following. The art car craze is common in the United States, even art car shows. The culture was once strongest throughout Texas and the Southeast but now it extends throughout the United States. Art car events can now be found in many major cities as well as in small country towns.

In Canada, art cars are popular in British Columbia and also in the western Canadian plains.

(REFERENCES: HTTP//WWW.ECCENTRICAMERICA.COM, (WWW.ARTCARS.COM

The 1st SUZUKI NATIONWIDE motorshow

Motorcycle lifestyle goes full throttle at the final lap of the

1st Suzuki Nationwide Motorshow

The Suzuki Nationwide Motor Show has been touring the Philippines in places like Baguio, Greater Manila Area, Pampanga, Quezon, Cebu, Iloilo, Davao, and Cagayan de Oro accelerating to this prestigious event culmination

December 2007 - Motorcycle riding has evolved from simply being the preferred means of transport for messengers and tricycle drivers into a more dynamic transportation solution that fits every lifestyle. And this motorcycle riding lifestyle revolution is what Suzuki Philippines Incorporated would want to get across to the Philippine market as it stages the final lap of the 1st Suzuki Nationwide Motor Show at the SM Mall of Asia which ran from 12 December to 16 December 2007.

The Suzuki Nationwide Motor Show has been touring the Philippines in places like Baguio, Greater Manila Area, Pampanga, Quezon, Cebu, Iloilo, Davao, and Cagayan de Oro accelerating to this prestigious event culmination. One of the highlights of the motor show is the regional competition in search of the best customax Suzuki motorcycles showcasing their dynamic personalities. These exceptional Suzuki bikes from all over the country will be judged according to their creativity/concept, originality, color combination/paint quality, presentation, safety, functionality and visitors' choice. Guests were entitled to vote for their favorite modified Suzuki bikes and get a chance to win in the raffle during the 5-day affair. Motorcycle enthusiasts and racing fans were in for a treat as they witness for themselves impressive and world-renowned motorcycles including the John Hopkin's Moto GP bike, the GSV-R; Tokyo Motorshow concept bikes, the Stratosphere and G-Strider; 2008 Suzuki Big Bikes from Japan, the Hayabusa, the B-King, the Intruder and 3 customized Hayate scooters from Thailand all on display

With Suzuki's commitment to reinforce safe motorcycle riding in the Philippines, guests participated in the Suzuki Safety Riding Seminar conducted by highly trained riding instructors focusing on correct riding postures, group riding, do's & don'ts of riding a motorcycle and other related topics on 13 December 2007. Guests also visited the Suzuki Safety Riding Booth wherein they will learn tips on safety riding along with a collection of safety riding gears courtesy of Motoworld.

Emphasizing on diversity and style of Suzuki motorcycles, the Suzuki Lifestyle Fashion Show on 14 December 2007 showcased the Suzuki apparel line as well as Motoworld motorcycle riding gears & helmets staged at the SM Mall of Asia Music Hall. The show highlighted the new Suzuki Hayate, the Step 125, the Raider J and the Raider 150

The Suzuki Riders Day on 15 December 2007 kicked off with a grand motorcade around Manila, Makati and Pasay wherein Suzuki riders from different motorcycle riding clubs traversed the roads. Riders partook in the Suzuki-Unioil Blitz Challenge at the IMAX Parking Lot to test their wit and grits in a variety of obstacles. Another crowd drawer would be the breathtaking stunt show performed by the Suzuki Stunt Team. After a long day of riding their bikes you would think it would be over but as night falls that's when Suzuki will get the crowd charged up at the Suzuki- Motolite Street Party. Live bands including Sandwich, The Dawn and Imago, games, raffle and a lot of exciting activities revved up the party.

Riders can bring their whole family to enjoy the fun-filled Suzuki Family Day on 16 December 2007 at the SM Mall of Asia Music Hall where they can participate in games, raffle and other exciting activities. Guests can also fine tune their vocal chords and show off their singing prowess in the Suzuki - Extreme Magic Sing Singing Challenge.

The 1st Suzuki Nationwide Motorshow will show you that whatever lifestyle you lead, whatever riding style you possess, there is a Suzuki motorcycle that will let you experience the road as never before.

This event was made possible in partnership with Unioil, Motolite Motorcycle Batteries, Inside Racing, and SM Supermalls with the valuable support by Samsung, Motoworld and Extreme Magic Sing.

Mr. Kawahara - President- Suzuki Philippines & Mr. Arreola - Marketing Manager - Suzuki Motorcycles

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See flyers for details. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 5840 Series of 2007.
TOYOTA moving forward ▶

Otto completes purchase of stake in Galoc field

By Abigail L. Ho

AUSTRALIA-BASED OTTO ENERGY Ltd. has completed its purchase of an 18.28-percent stake in the Galoc production field covered by Service Contract 14C off Northwest Palawan.

In a disclosure to the Australian Stock Exchange, Otto chief executive Alex Parks said the company was now one of the stakeholders in the SC 14C-covered Galoc petroleum field, following the completion of its acquisition of Team Oil Ltd. and Cape Energy Philippines SA.

Cape Philippines and Team Oil each owned 15.69 percent of SC 14C operator Galoc Production Co. (GPC), with a subsidiary of the Vitol Group owning the remaining 68.62 percent.

The combined shares of Cape Philippines and Team Oil effectively gave Otto an 18.28-percent share in the service contract.

GPC owns 58.29 percent of SC 14C. Australian firm Nido Petroleum Ltd. is the second biggest shareholder with a 22.28-percent stake.

Payment for the SC 14C stake came from a two-tranche shares placement worth A$67.8 million ($61.2 million).

Of this total, A$62 million ($57.2 million) went straight into the SC 14C stake acquisition, including all the fees associated with the deal.

The A$67.8 million will be raised via placing 226 million new shares at a price of 30 Australian cents a share.

"Otto is very pleased with the transaction. The revenues from Galoc's oil production will fund Otto's exciting exploration programs, which could deliver significant oil and gas discoveries in Otto's worldwide acreage in the second half of 2008 and 2009," Parks said.

Otto expects to earn net revenues of between $30 million and $45 million from the Galoc oil field in 2008, enough to bolster its working capital requirements in the next few years.

Parks earlier said that the company's "conservative" estimate of its share from the Galoc proceeds in 2008 was around $30 million, in line with the research assumptions of financial services firm Euroz.

This was based on an average oil price of around $60 a barrel, he said.

"On current oil prices, Otto's net revenue in 2008 could be as much as $45 million from the Galoc proceeds alone," he related.

"We expect similar revenue in 2009 as production will be over four quarters instead of the three in 2008. We expect revenues to drop off a little in 2010, unless a further development well is added to the field. So we have a reasonable cash flow profile going forward," he added.

He added that the company's cash flow and future working capital requirements would be supplemented by proceeds from expected gas production in Turkey starting late 2008 or early 2009 and possible production from the Calauit oil field in the Northwest Palawan Basin in 2009.

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Manila Southwoods A/B*	300,000/Pls. Call*	250,000
Makati Sports Club A/B*	250,000	190,000
Manila Yacht Club Ind.	200,000	-
Metropolitan Club A/B*	160,000	100,000
Mimosa C1/C2*/C3**	220,000/580,000**	150,000/400,000*/600,000**
Mt. Malarayat A	180,000	-
Orchard A/B*/C**	160,000/250,000*/380,000**	-
Quezon City Sports Club	170,000	120,000
Riviera Golf A/B*/C**	150,000*/250,000**	120,000*/130,000**
Rockwell Leisure Club	300,000	Pls. Call
Royale Tagaytay CC	65,000	-
Sherwood A/B*/C**	70,000/130,000*	100,000*
Splendido Taal	250,000	Pls. Call
Sta. Elena Golf A/B*	2,100,000/2,500,000*	1,600,000
The Palms Country Club	350,000	300,000
Tagaytay Country Club	-	280,000
Tagaytay Highlands	-	Pls. Call
Tagaytay Midlands	650,000	-
Valley Golf	250,000	200,000
Valle Verde Ind.	100,000	70,000
Wack Wack Golf	Pls. Call	-

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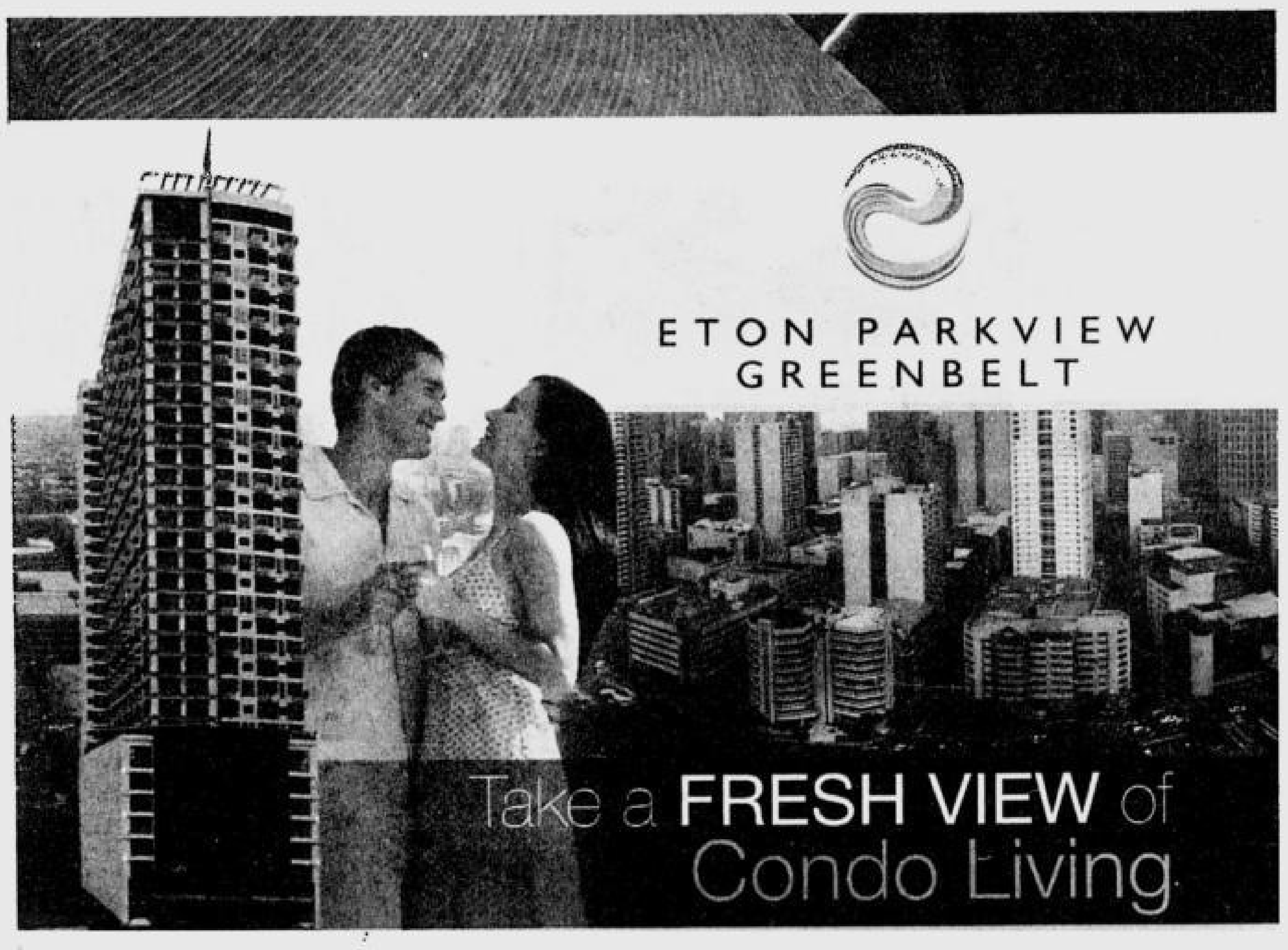
CURRENCIES

December 21, 2007 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.698080	1.000000	41.7950
Japan	Yen	0.006173	0.008843	0.3696
United Kingdom	Pound	1.384363	1.983100	82.8837
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.089479	0.128179	5.3572
Switzerland	Franc	0.602676	0.863334	36.0830
Canada	Dollar	0.697453	0.999101	41.7574
Singapore	Dollar	0.478465	0.685401	28.6463
Australia	Dollar	0.599365	0.858590	35.8848
Bahrain	Dinar*	1.859019	2.663045	111.3020
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.186155	0.266667	11.1453
Brunei	Dollar	0.476831	0.683060	28.5485
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000074	0.000106	0.0044
Thailand	Baht	0.022850	0.032733	1.3681
UAE	Dirham	0.190083	0.272294	11.3805
EU	Euro	1.000000	1.432500	59.8713
Korea	Won	0.000740	0.001060	0.0443
China	Yuan**	0.094727	0.135696	5.6714
Denmark	Kroner	0.133999	0.191953	8.0227
India	Rupee	0.017713	0.025374	1.0605
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.208382	0.298507	12.4761
New Zealand	Dollar	0.528448	0.757002	31.6389
Sweden	Kroner	0.105760	0.151501	6.3320
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.021495	0.030792	1.2870

Source: Reuters' forex closing prices as of NY time—Dec. 20, 2007
* Various banks in Bahrain as quoted in Reuters' Screen. ** Asian time closing rate as of Dec. 20, 2007



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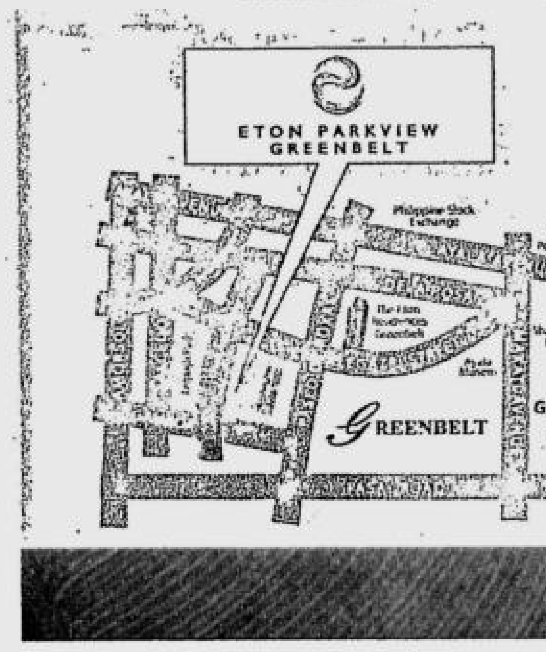

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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 21, 2007)

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
		BANKS					
17.5	6.8	Asiatrust Development Bank Inc.	8.3	8.3	8.3	8.3	30,000
73	44	Banco de Oro-EPCI Inc.	59	61	59	60.5	10,012,800
73.5	53	Bank of the Philippine Islands	59	60	59	60	1,149,300
748	544	China Banking Corp.	655	655	650	650	620
23.75	14	Citystate Savings Bank	23.5	23.75	23.5	23.75	2,000
0.63	0.36	Export and Industry Bank Inc.	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	490,000
75.5	47.5	Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co.	55.5	56	55	55	1,015,200
65.5	39	Philippine National Bank	46.5	48	46.5	48	4,000
68	48	Philippine Savings Bank	59.5	60	59.5	60	3,000
39.57	20.43	Rizal Commercial Banking Corp.	24	24	23.5	23.5	385,600
90	65	Security Bank Corp.	77	77	77	77	143,300
66	42	Union Bank of the Philippines	43	43.5	43	43	37,800
		OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
2.22	0.6	Bankard Inc.	1.86	1.86	1.8	1.84	414,000
16.25	4.6	CitisecOnline.com Inc.	10.5	11	10.5	11	626,900
43.5	29	First Metro Investment Corp.	43.5	43.5	43.5	43.5	200
5.9	4.6	I-Remit Inc.	4.65	4.75	4.65	4.75	16,000
6.8	1.74	Makati Finance Corp.	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8	1,000
1,970.00	1,580.00	Manulife Financial Corp.	1,615.00	1,615.00	1,615.00	1,615.00	10
5	2.7	National Reinsurance Corp. of the Phils.	3.15	3.2	3.15	3.2	932,000
1,390.00	272.5	The Philippine Stock Exchange Inc.	1,015.00	1,025.00	1,015.00	1,020.00	8,950
1.94	1.3	iVantage Corp.	1.7	1.7	1.66	1.66	2,360,000
		ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
6.2	3.8	Aboitiz Power Corp.	5	5.3	5	5.2	1,495,000
0.57	0.22	East Asia Power Resources Corp.	0.39	0.4	0.39	0.4	150,000
70.5	49	First Gen Corp.	60.5	60.5	60.5	60.5	23,200
92	58	First Phil. Holdings Corp.	72.5	74	72.5	73	176,300
18.75	8.8	Manila Water Co. Inc.	18.5	18.75	18.5	18.5	3,128,500
105.45	48.64	Manila Electric Co.	80	81.5	80	80.5	577,400
7.8	4.3	PNOC Energy Development Corp.	6.7	6.8	6.7	6.8	27,760,000
7.4	3.95	Petron Corp.	5.7	5.8	5.6	5.6	4,545,000
14.75	6.4	Phoenix Petroleum Philippines Inc.	6.8	7	6.7	6.7	158,000
2.04	0.94	Trans-Asia Oil and Energy Dev't Corp.	1.22	1.22	1.2	1.2	927,000
		FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
6.3	3.4	Alaska Milk Corp.	5.1	5.3	5.1	5.3	193,000
2.32	1.46	Alliance Tuna International Inc.	1.56	1.56	1.5	1.5	738,000
2.2	1.08	CADP Group Corp.	1.7	1.82	1.7	1.82	122,000
28.5	20	Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	23	23	23	23	100,000
61	40.5	Jollibee Foods Corp.	49.5	50	49.5	50	681,100
0.98	0.5	RFM Corp.	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	180,000
3.1	2.06	Roxas Holdings	2.85	2.85	2.85	2.85	1,070,000
80	42.5	San Miguel Corp. "A"	59.5	60.5	59.5	60	202,100
88	43	San Miguel Corp. "B"	60	61.5	60	61	493,200
20.75	13.5	Universal Robina Corp.	13.75	13.75	13.5	13.5	988,300
0.55	0.24	Vitarich Corp.	0.39	0.39	0.37	0.37	80,000
		CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
6.1	2.65	EEI Corp.	4	4.1	4	4.1	226,000
9.2	4.95	Holcim Philippines Inc.	8	8	8	8	10,000
7	3.65	Republic Cement Corp.	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	250,000
2	0.81	Southeast Asia Cement Holdings Inc.	0.99	0.99	0.97	0.97	530,000
23	2.12	TKC Steel Corp.	8.8	8.9	8.8	8.9	11,000
		CHEMICALS					
6.3	3.75	Chemrez Technologies Inc.	4.15	4.2	4.15	4.2	372,000
1.46	0.51	Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.8	0.85	0.8	0.85	40,000
		DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
9	6.2	Splash Corp.	8.1	8.1	7.9	7.9	2,074,000
		HOLDING FIRMS					
39	18.75	ABS-CBN Holdings Corp.-PDR	34	34	34	34	140,400
3.9	2.7	A. Soriano Corp.	3.4	3.45	3.4	3.45	11,020,000
0.185	0.0575	AJO.net Holdings Inc.	0.115	0.12	0.11	0.115	45,630,000
1.28	0.3	APC Group Inc.	0.59	0.62	0.59	0.59	6,360,000
3.65	1.5	ATN Holdings Inc. "A"	2.38	2.46	2.38	2.46	93,000
3.7	1.5	ATN Holdings Inc. "B"	2.5	2.95	2.5	2.85	87,000
0.0182	0.0076	Abacus Cons. Res. and Hold'gs Inc. "A"	0.0095	0.011	0.0095	0.01	12,054,000,000
0.019	0.0085	Abacus Cons. Res. and Hold'gs Inc. "B"	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.012	72,000,000
9.7	5.8	Aboitiz Equity Ventures Inc.	6.9	7	6.8	6.8	2,148,000
0.021	0.01	Alcorn Gold Resources Corp.	0.015	0.015	0.014	0.014	30,800,000
7.3	3.5	Alliance Global Group Inc.	5.2	5.5	5.1	5.3	5,468,000
1.38	0.61	Alsons Consolidated Resources Inc.	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	60,000
2.9	1.04	Anglo-Philippine Holdings Corp.	2.34	2.36	2.32	2.34	744,000
645	400	Ayala Corp.	505	515	505	510	109,190
15.25	7.83	Bacnotan Consolidated Industries Inc.	13	13	13	13	1,500
5.8	2.14	Benpres Holdings Corp.	4.5	4.7	4.5	4.65	35,895,000
12	5.6	DMCI Holdings Inc.	9.3	9.7	9.3	9.6	360,000
2.5	0.85	F and J Prince Holdings Corp. "A"	1.46	1.46	1.46	1.46	30,000
8	3.5	Filinvest Development Corp.	5.8	5.8	5.8	5.8	25,000
14.5	8.9	JG Summit Holdings Inc.	10.25	10.5	10.25	10.5	180,000
5.9	0.61	Jolliville Holdings Corp.	1.66	1.66	1.6	1.6	210,000
28	1.42	Lodestar Investment Hldgs Corp.	16	17	16	16.25	16,500
0.8	0.24	MEDCO Holdings Inc.	0.54	0.6	0.54	0.6	20,000
11.5	1.5	Minerales Industrias Corp.	6.2	6.3	6.2	6.2	645,000
8.5	3.1	PAL Holdings Inc.	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.2	4,000
0.28	0.016	Pacifica Inc. "A"	0.205	0.21	0.2	0.205	34,490,000
0.75	0.19	Prime Orion Philippines Inc.	0.51	0.53	0.51	0.53	1,480,000
2.1	1.3	Republic Glass Holdings Corp.	1.82	1.82	1.82	1.82	20,000
452.5	292.51	SM Investments Corp.	340	350	340	340	22,880
2.1	1.08	Seafront Resources Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	334,000
0.73	0.155	Sinophil Corp.	0.35	0.35	0.34	0.34	500,000
1.06	0.61	Solid Group Inc.	0.76	0.76	0.69	0.69	50,000
2.9	0.93	Vivant Corp.	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	20,000
0.75	0.12	Wellex Industries Inc.	0.28	0.29	0.28	0.29	150,000
		PROPERTY					
2.38	1	A Brown Co. Inc.	2.1	2.14	2.02	2.04	3,791,000
8.9	5	Anchor Land Holdings Inc.	7.2	7.3	7.2	7.3	7,000
1.06	0.4	Araneta Properties Inc.	0.56	0.56	0.56	0.56	60,000
19.25	12.08	Ayala Land Inc.	14.25	14.5	14.25	14.25	9,275,600
1.88	1	Belle Corp.	1.24	1.26	1.24	1.26	1,010,000
2.7	1.25	Cityland Development Corp.	1.62	1.62	1.62	1.62	30,000
0.86	0.4	Crown Equities Inc.	0.59	0.59	0.59	0.59	100,000
0.83	0.24	Cyber Bay Corp.	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.37	3,100,000
1.05	0.56	Empire East Land Holdings Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	2,550,000
0.47	0.0575	Ever Gotesco Resources and Hold'gs Inc.	0.22	0.23	0.22	0.22	2,730,000
1.48	0.61	Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.94	0.96	0.94	0.95	9,130,000
2.44	1.22	Filinvest Land Inc.	1.34	1.38	1.34	1.34	19,586,000
1.12	0.31	MRC Allied Industries Inc.	0.55	0.55	0.53	0.53	310,000
4.6	2.24	Megaworld Corp.	3.85	4	3.85	3.95	23,216,000
6.4	3.2	Metro Pacific Investments Corp.	4	4.25	4	4	109,000
0.7	0.15	Phil. Estates Corp.	0.3	0.34	0.3	0.34	70,000
0.86	0.32	Philippine Realty and Holdings Corp.	0.48	0.5	0.47	0.47	5,680,000
9.2	1.7	Polar Property Holdings Corp.	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.3	20,000
23	14.5	Robinson Land Corp.	16	16	16	16	2,403,000
5.9	2.08	SM Development Corp.	3.75	3.75	3.7	3.75	1,308,000
13.5	8	SM Prime Holdings Inc.	10.5	10.75	10.5	10.75	4,440,800
3.25	1.5	Shang Properties Inc.	2.2	2.2	2.18	2.2	608,000
4.5	0.38	Sta. Lucia Land Inc.	1.7	1.74	1.64	1.64	1,000,000
1.34	0.46	Suntrust Home Developers Inc.	0.59	0.59	0.58	0.58	520,000
0.49	0.0975	Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	10,000
7.5	3.65	Vista Land and Lifescapes Inc.	5.8	5.8	5.6	5.8	1,554,000
		MEDIA					
38.5	18.75	ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	33	33	33	33	13,000
12	7.6	GMA Holdings Inc.	8	8	7.9	8	3,476,000
11.75	7.5	GMA Network Inc.	7.8	7.8	7.7	7.7	615,000
		TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
2.12	1.1	Digital Telecommunications Phils. Inc.	1.62	1.66	1.6	1.64	8,160,000
1,750.00	1,180.00	Globe Telecom Inc.	1,485.00	1,515.00	1,485.00	1,510.00	59,600
3,285.00	2,250.00	Phil. Long Distance Telephone Co.	3,020.00	3,040.00	3,020.00	3,030.00	101,710
8.1	5.5	Pilipino Telephone Corp.	7.1	7.3	7.1	7.3	5,952,000
		INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
0.39	0.17	Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	400,000
16.5	2.1	Diversified Financial Network Inc.	15.25	15.25	14.75	15	466,300
11.5	3.55	IPVG Corp.	7.3	7.3	7.1	7.3	338,000
0.065	0.027	ISM Communications Corp.	0.036	0.037	0.036	0.036	23,600,000
5	1.62	Information Capital Tech. Ventures Inc.	3	3	3	3	12,000
2.9	1.1	Ionics Inc.	1.42	1.42	1.42	1.42	200,000
0.32	0.05	Island Information and Technology Inc.	0.17	0.17	0.165	0.165	2,510,000
2.26	1.1	Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.9	1.94	1.9	1.9	298,000
0.0725	0.03	Philweb Corp.	0.044	0.045	0.044	0.045	88,800,000
4.7	1.64	Transpacific Broadband Group Int'l. Inc.	2.34	2.42	2.34	2.34	1,485,000
		TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
49	19	Int'l Container Terminal Services Inc.	44	44	43.5	43.5	143,000
2.3	0.93	Keppel Philippines Marine Inc.	2.2	2.22	2.2	2.2	836,000
		HOTEL & LEISURE					
4.25	1.8	Leisure and Resorts World Corp.	2.32	2.36	2.3	2.36	490,000
1.52	0.33	Premiere Entertainment Productions Inc.	1.2	1.24	1.2	1.2	2,331,000
1.2	0.55	Waterfront Philippines Inc.	0.8	0.81	0.8	0.81	100,000
		EDUCATION					
950	650	Far Eastern University Inc.	805	805	805	805	90
3.7	2.6	iPeople Inc.	3.2	3.2	3.15	3.15	117,000
		DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
6.14	0.94	JTH Davies Holdings Inc.	4.8	4.8	4.6	4.6	29,000
6	2.04	Macroasia Corp.	4.75	4.75	4.7	4.7	102,000
17.25	9.8	Pacific Online Systems Corp.	10.25	10.25	10	10.25	250,100
30	5.3	Paxys Inc.	6	6.2	5.9	6.2	583,000
472.5	350	eTelecare Global Solutions Inc.	380	385	380	385	2,570
		MINING					
0.017	0.0085	Abra Mining and Industrial Corp.	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	28,000,000
7.2	3.6	Apex Mining Co. Inc. "A"	5.9	5.9	5.9	5.9	115,000
7.4	3.85	Apex Mining Co. Inc. "B"	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.2	59,000
21.25	8.1	Atlas Cons. Mining and Dev't Corp.	13.25	13.5	13	13.5	401,000
20.75	8.9	Benguet Corp. "A"	19	19	18.75	18.75	96,800
12.75	2.18	Dizon Copper Silver Mines Inc.	8.4	8.4	8.2	8.3	355,000
3.1	0.6	GEOGRACE Resources Philippines Inc.	1.84	1.86	1.78	1.8	11,912,000
0.56	0.18	Lepanto Consolidated Mining Co. "A"	0.49	0.49	0.46	0.46	11,330,000
0.61	0.22	Lepanto Consolidated Mining Co. "B"	0.5	0.5	0.47	0.48	19,740,000
0.038	0.017	Manila Mining Corp. "A"	0.028	0.028	0.027	0.028	21,100,000
0.041	0.02	Manila Mining Corp. "B"	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.029	53,000,000
30	3.6	NIHAO Minerals Resources Int'l Inc.	19	19.5	18.5	18.75	123,100
0.021	0.01	Omico Corp.	0.013	0.013	0.013	0.013	63,800,000
0.015	0.007	Omico Corp.-Warrants	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009	24,000,000
3.3	3	Oriental Peninsula Resources Group Inc.	3.2	3.25	3.1	3.25	20,543,000
11.25	3.5	Philex Mining Corp.	9.4	9.4	9.1	9.1	8,694,000
1.76	0.99	Vulcan Industrial and Mining Corp.	1.04	1.08	1.04	1.04	1,098,000
		OIL					
0.58	0.27	Basic Energy Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	1,980,000
0.029	0.011	Oriental Pet. and Minerals Corp. "A"	0.023	0.023	0.023	0.023	204,000,000
0.03	0.011	Oriental Pet. and Minerals Corp. "B"	0.024	0.025	0.024	0.025	7,200,000
13.75	9	Petroenergy Resources Corp.	10	10	10	10	40,000
0.032	0.0098	The Philodrill Corp.	0.028	0.029	0.028	0.029	31,700,000

AVERAGES			VOLUME	VALUE
Financial	856.93 UP	11.41	17,631,680	770,063,710.00
Industrial	4,446.30 UP	32.20	47,901,100	465,911,925.00
Holding Firms	1,927.96 UP	38.49	12,302,973,070	461,232,385.00
Property	1,494.88 UP	27.53	92,618,400	377,434,630.00
Service	1,821.15 UP	9.51	137,982,370	498,811,975.00
Mining & Oil	7,952.34 DOWN	180.90	485,286,900	206,423,565.00
All Shares Index	2,176.74 UP	26.53		
PSEI	3,532.98 UP	41.02		
		GRAND TOTALS	13,084,393,520	2,779,878,190.00

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"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."
2 Timothy 4:7

Catalina Remedios Mendoza vda. de La Rosa

peacefully joined her Creator on the 21st of December 2007 at the age of 99.

She will be missed by her children **Tito & Lourds, Doring, Menchie & Gabriel, Joe & Linda, Eddie & Naty**. Her grandchildren and great-grandchildren will lovingly keep her memories.

Her remains lie in state at the Loyola Memorial Chapels & Crematorium, Inc. – Sucat. Interment will be on Saturday, December 29, 2007 at the Loyola Memorial Park, Parañaque.

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AFTER 21 YEARS, DON'T YOU WANT TO REMInisce all the fun and nerve-wrecking memories? Come and see your batchmates once again! St. James Academy, Malabon Batch '86 is inviting all Alumni for the "Balik Tanaw Reunion" on Dec. 29, 5 p.m. at Oasis, 3rd Floor Gallery, Aurora Blvd., Quezon City (near Broadway Centrum). An enjoyable night of 80's music, gift giving, exciting games, and major raffle and surprises await you! For confirmation, call Arnold at 447-2525 or mobile (0918-9379587).

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No eye has seen, no ear has heard,
no mind has conceived what God
has prepared for those who love Him.
1 Cor 2:9

MICHAEL MAGANTI JOSEPH

November 28, 1926 – December 22, 2007

passed away in the peace of our Lord and His Sacraments.

Prayers are requested for his eternal joy.

His bereaved wife is **Grace Powell**; children and grandchildren are **Michael Jr.**, **Josephine** and **Claire**; **Steven** (†), **Shirley**, **Stephen** and **Sarene**; **Mary Grace**, **Arnold Sr.**, **Arnold**, **Erica** and **Zachary Andreasen**; **Gordon**, **Corinne**, **Morgan** and **Justine**; **Christian**, **Kathleen**, **Alexandra** and **Christian Jr.**, **Mark**; **Kathleen**, **Carlos**, **Matteo** and **Pio David**. His surviving sibling is **Susana Santamaria**.

His cremated remains will be at Capilla del Señor, Sanctuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park on December 26 and 27, 2007. A Requiem Mass will be at 3:30 p.m., Thursday, December 27, 2007.

Interment will follow at the Church crypt.

Please omit flowers. A donation to the Foundation of **Our Lady of Peace Mission, Inc.** will be appreciated.

"...absent from the body to be present with the Lord."
2 Corinthians 5:8

ADRIAN EMPREMIADO CRISTÓBAL,

age 75,

joined his Maker on the 22nd of December, 2007.

His wife **Teresita**;
his children, **Anna & Tony, Celina, Stella & Lex** (†),
Adrian "Che" Jr. & Dina,
Pia & David and **Monica & Dan**;
his grandchildren, **Andrea & Steve, Aldo,**
Alejandro, Miguel, Aryn,
Axel, Tessa, Adrik, Alon, Danny and **Andrew**;
and his great-granddaughter **Ava**
are deeply grateful for the love, support and admiration
given him during his lifetime.

"Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart."
Psalm 16:9

There will be a two-day wake (26 and 27 of December) at the Santuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park, Makati. The Funeral Mass will be held on the 28th, 9 o'clock in the morning.

"I do worry about the effect of what I write on readers;
but it is something I cannot help.
I cannot do anything else but write."
A.E. Cristóbal

In lieu of flowers, please donate to a health fund for writers, care of WRITERS UNION OF THE PHILIPPINES or UMPIL (Unyon ng mga Manunulat ng Pilipinas)

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NOTICE OF LOSS

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(PDI – December 14, 19 & 26, 2007)

Death Notice

NARCISO S. SAN JUAN

Died peacefully on December 22, 2007 at the age of 75.

His body lies in state at # 3 Fuse St., Meralco Village, Marilao, Bulacan.

Interment will be today, December 26 at Marilao Memorial Park at 2:00 p.m.

FR. JOHN E. CHAMBERS, S.J.

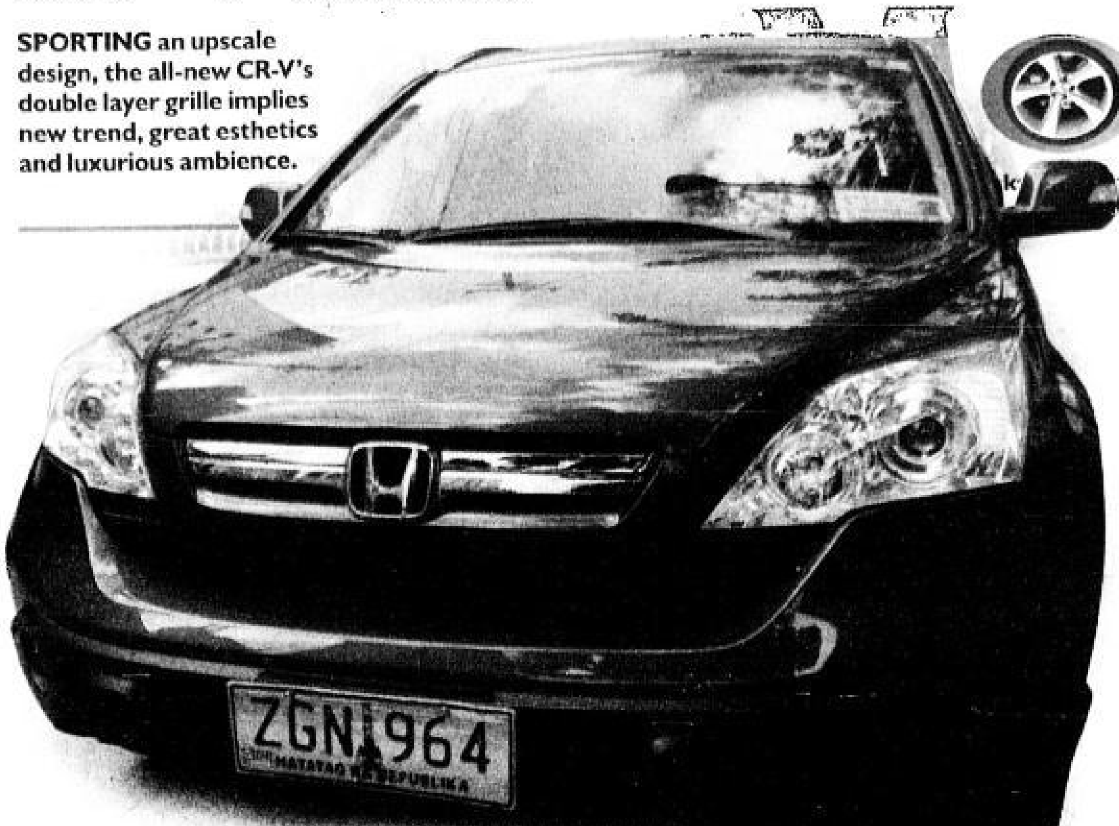
was called home to the Lord on Monday, 24 December 2007.

Wake: Oratory of St. Ignatius at Loyola House of Studies,
Ateneo de Manila University Campus, Loyola Heights, Q.C.
Daily Mass at 8:00 P.M.

Funeral Mass: at 2:30 P.M. on Friday, 28 December
in the Oratory of St. Ignatius, Loyola House of Studies.

Interment: Sacred Heart Novitiate Cemetery, Novaliches, Q.C.,
immediately after the Funeral Mass.

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE REPOSE OF HIS SOUL.



SPORTING an upscale design, the all-new CR-V's double layer grille implies new trend, great esthetics and luxurious ambience.

THE ALL-NEW Outlander is fitted with auto-leveling high intensity discharge headlamps that does not only look cool but provides excellent visibility when driving at night.

Sexy toughies

Text and photos by Charles E. Buban

A COUPLE OF WEEKS BACK, this writer was able to drive two of the more popular rides in the market today, Honda's third generation CR-V and Mitsubishi's second generation Outlander.

Being crossovers, both offer the best of both worlds: the cargo-carrying size of a compact sport utility vehicle (SUV) and handling of a midsize sedan.

Well, one could also add the four-wheel-drive capability, which both offer (at least in the top variant of the CR-V).

Being latest editions, both models were given stunning new designs, which is most evident in the all-new CR-V.

One of the strongest

As one of the strongest players in the hotly contested compact SUV segment, Honda decided that the next reiteration of its top selling CR-V should be one that is devastatingly good-looking as well as well-built.

The third generation CR-V, indeed, adhered closely to such principles with a completely revamped body structure (for example, the ungainly spare tire is now found under the cargo area giving the all new CR-V cleaner silhouette as well as making it shorter by 7.9 cm).

Sporting a new double grille design, scoop-like front bumper and a side profile with an arched window shape accent, the all-new CR-V gives off a distinctive and upscale presence.

This writer was assigned a 2.0 automatic, the two-wheel-drive version of the all-new CR-V, which is P200,000 less expensive as well and 20 horsepower short than the P1.450 million, 2.4-liter, 4WD variant.

Endearing qualities

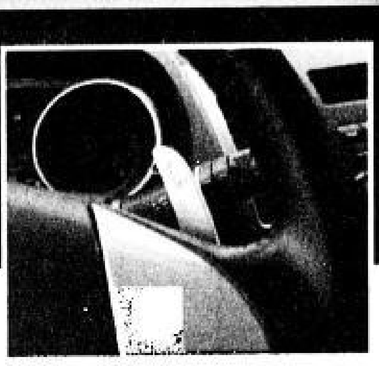
Notwithstanding, the variant that this writer got still exhibited several endearing qualities that pervade in three available variants of the all-new CR-V.

On the road, the all-new CR-V is steady and very quiet, which could be attributed to the fact that this vehicle has an even more sophisticated interior and improved chassis design.

It now has a lower center of gravity (reduced by 3.5 cm), wider stance (increased by 3.0 cm) and a number of changes to steering and suspension geometry to instill more driver confidence.

SEXY/ B4

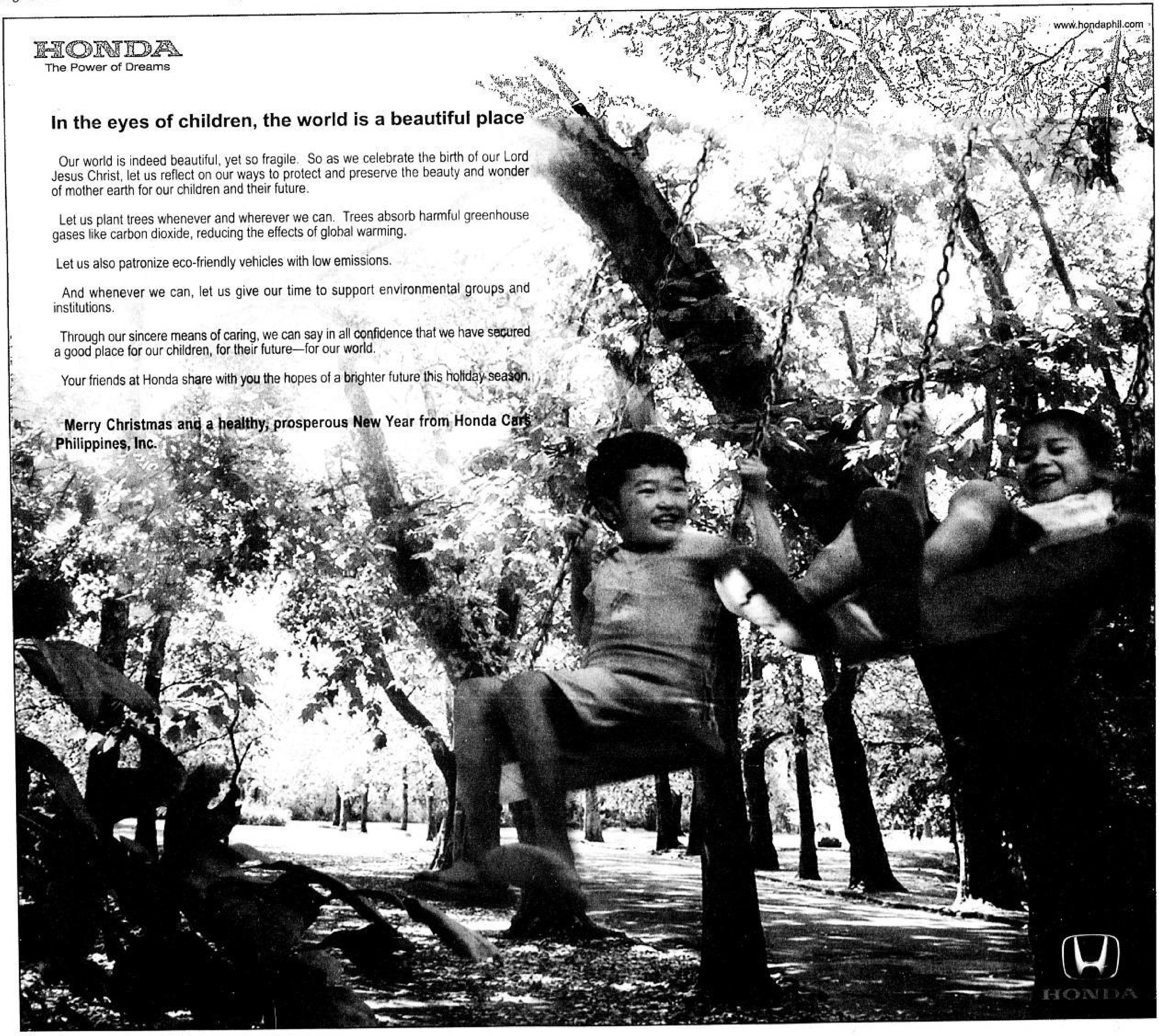
THE ALL-NEW CR-V uses a compact platform that features safety-enhancing technology.



FOR A MORE spirited drive, the all-new Outlander is equipped with a paddle shift behind the steering wheel.

YES, that's a Rockford Fosgate sound system fitted inside the all-new Outlander.

THE ALL-NEW Outlander's hatch offers two opening options as well as huge cargo space.



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Let us plant trees whenever and wherever we can. Trees absorb harmful greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide, reducing the effects of global warming.

Let us also patronize eco-friendly vehicles with low emissions.

And whenever we can, let us give our time to support environmental groups and institutions.

Through our sincere means of caring, we can say in all confidence that we have secured a good place for our children, for their future—for our world.

Your friends at Honda share with you the hopes of a brighter future this holiday season.

Merry Christmas and a healthy, prosperous New Year from Honda Cars Philippines, Inc.

HONDA

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2007 Rewind

In our last issue for 2007, 2bU! hits the rewind button to look back at the year that was. Here are the newsmakers, the music, the athletes, the gadgets and the fashion that rocked your 2007

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VANESSA Hudgens

Noisemakers and scene-stealers

By Niño Mark M. Sablan
2bU! Correspondent

FROM NEWCOMERS WHO ACHIEVED great career success to teeners with attached scandals to their names, from overnight sensations to plain attention-deprived scene-stealers, here is a list of names that made deafening noise in 2007.

Scene-stealers

The Spice Girls. Everyone was delighted to hear that Posh, Ginger, Scary, Sporty and Baby were reuniting. So when they actually did and embarked on a world tour, tickets were sold out in no time at all. One of the biggest girl groups ever, the Spice Girls are currently touring the world, performing their greatest hits and their latest single called "Headlines."

Sanjaya Malakar. While this "American Idol" contestant raked in a lot of fans and votes, he received a lot of criticism from the show's judges and from viewers around the world as well. But whether he was loved or hated for his ever-changing hairstyles, sexual preference or his take on songs like "Bathwater" by No Doubt and "Waiting on the World to Change" by John Mayer, there is no denying that Sanjaya is one of AI's most unforgettable contestants—all batches counted.

Teri Hatcher. It's not the fact that her "Desperate Housewives" character, Susan Mayer, always gets the best-looking men in the show. What made her—or her character—controversial this year was the racial slur she said: "Okay, before we go any further, can I check those diplomas? Because I would just like to make sure that they're not from some med school in the Philippines."

Outraged Filipinos from all over the world demanded an apology. The TV network eventually backed down, issuing a statement of regret.

Isaiah Washington. Known as Dr. Preston Burke in the hit TV series "Grey's Anatomy," the actor used a homophobic insult aimed at co-star T.R. Knight on the show's set. He was sent to attend counseling, and then was dropped from the show. Good riddance.

Anna Nicole Smith. The former Guess and Playboy model, who died from an acci

NOISEMAKERS/ C3

SHIA LaBeouf

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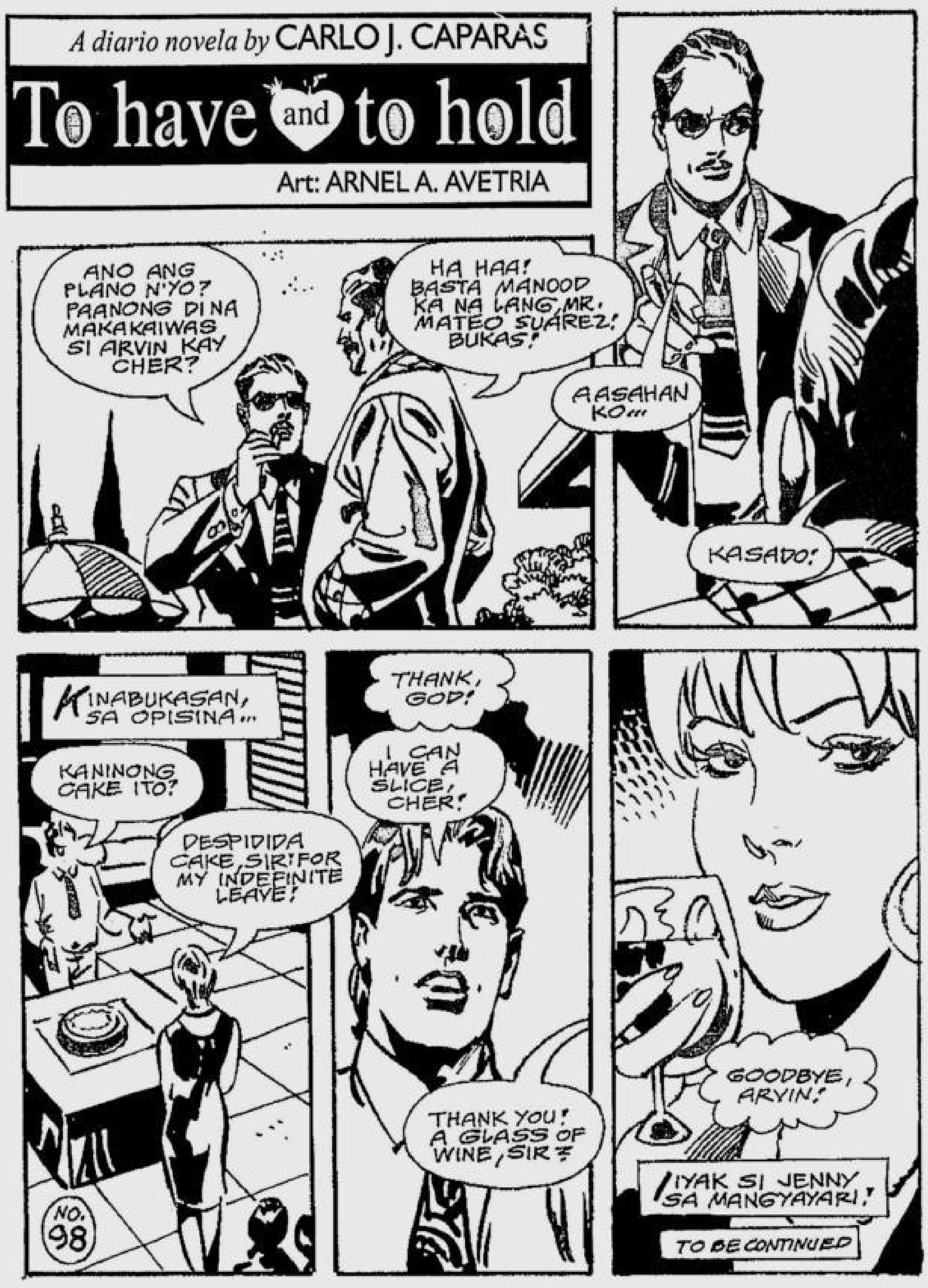
A diario novela by CARLO J. CAPARAS

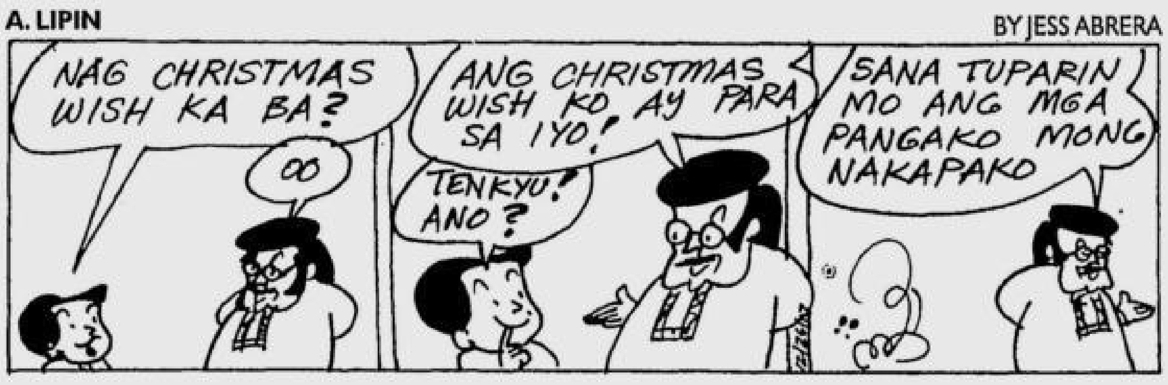
To have and to hold

Art: ARNEL A. AVETRIA


ANO ANG PLANO N'YO? PAANONG DI NA MAKAKAIWAS SI ARVIN KAY CHER?
HA HAA! BASTA MANOOD KA NA LANG, MR. MATEO SUAREZ! BUKAS!
AASAHAN KO...
KASADO!
KINABUKASAN, SA OPISINA...
KANINONG CAKE ITO?
DESPIDIDA CAKE, SIR! FOR MY INDEFINITE LEAVE!
NO. 98
THANK, GOD!
I CAN HAVE A SLICE, CHER!
THANK YOU! A GLASS OF WINE, SIR?
GOODBYE, ARVIN!
IIYAK SI JENNY SA MANGYAYARI!
TO BE CONTINUED

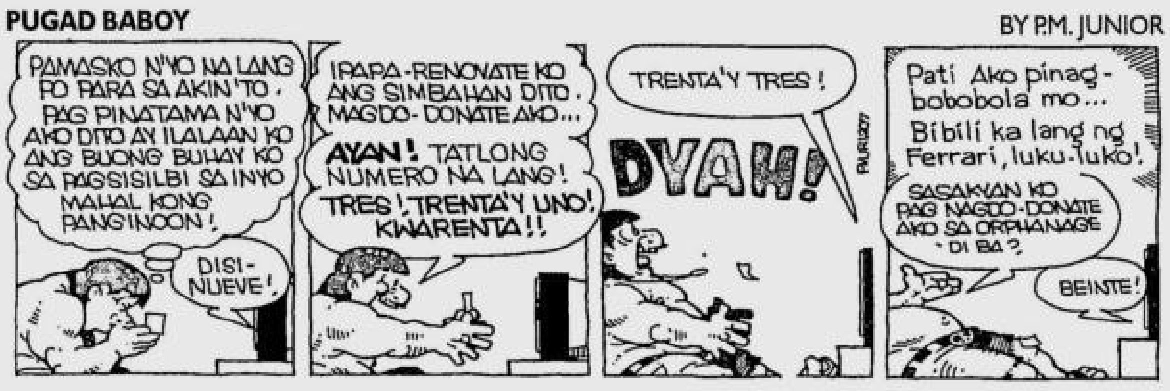
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


NAG CHRISTMAS WISH KA BA?
OO
ANG CHRISTMAS WISH KO AY PARA SA IYO!
TENKYU! ANO?
SANA TUPARIN MO ANG MGA PANGAKO MONG NAKAPAKO

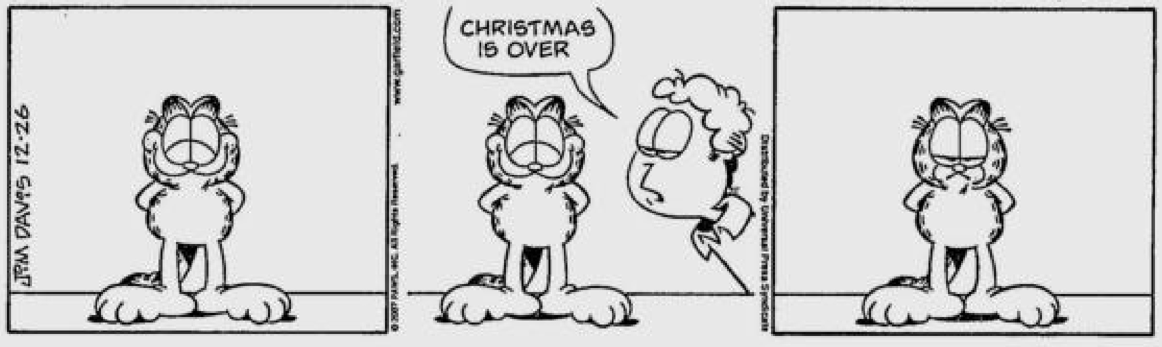
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


PAMASKO N'YO NA LANG PO PARA SA AKIN 'TO. PAG PINATAMA N'YO AKO DITO AY ILALAAN KO ANG BUONG BUHAY KO SA PAGSISILBI SA INYO MAHAL KONG PANGINOON!
DISI-NUEVE!
IPAPA-RENOVATE KO ANG SIMBAHAN DITO. MAGDO-DONATE AKO...
AYAN! TATLONG NUMERO NA LANG!
TRES! TRENTA'Y UNO! KWARENTA!!
TRENTA'Y TRES!
DYAH!
Pati Ako pinag-bobobola mo... Bibili ka lang ng Ferrari, luku-luko!
SASAKYAN KO PAG NAGDO-DONATE AKO SA ORPHANAGE DI BA?
BEINTE!

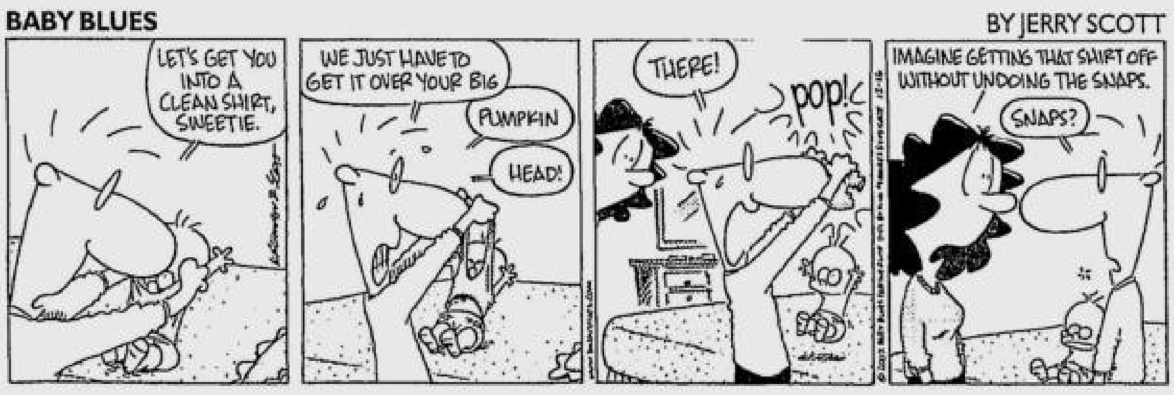
GARFIELD

BY JIM DAVIS


JIM DAVIS 12-26
CHRISTMAS IS OVER

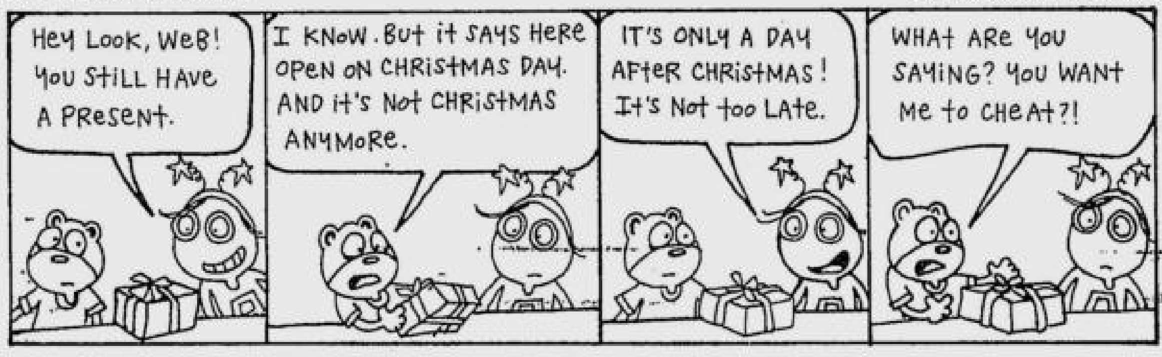
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


LET'S GET YOU INTO A CLEAN SHIRT, SWEETIE.
WE JUST HAVE TO GET IT OVER YOUR BIG
PUMPKIN
HEAD!
THERE!
POP!
IMAGINE GETTING THAT SHIRT OFF WITHOUT UNDOING THE SNAPS.
SNAPS?

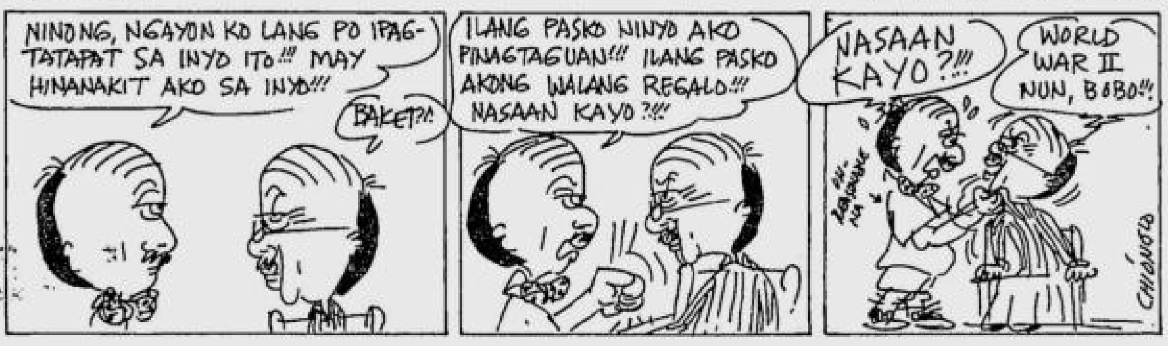
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


Hey Look, WeB! You StiLL HAve A Present.
I KNow. But it SAys Here OpeN oN CHRistMAS DAy. AND it's Not CHRistMAS ANyMoRe.
IT'S ONLy A DAy After CHRistMAS! It's Not too LAte.
WHAt ARe You SAyiNG? You WANt Me to CHeAt?!

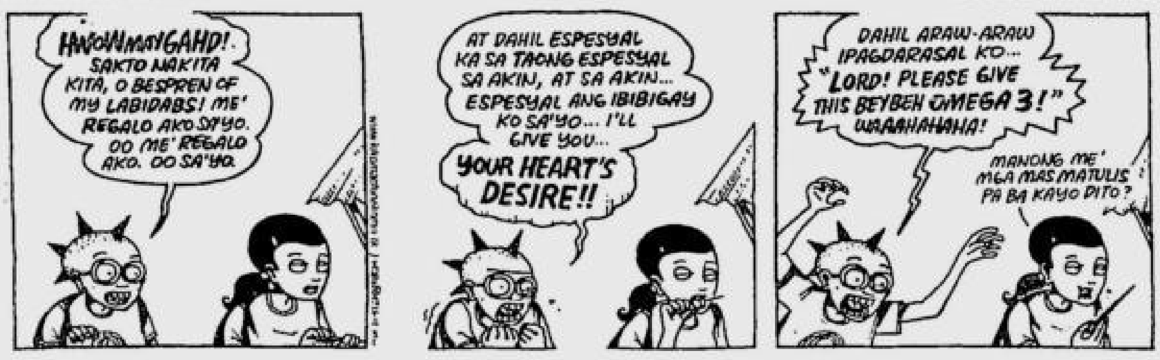
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


NINONG, NGAYON KO LANG PO IPAGTATAPAT SA INYO ITO!!! MAY HINANAKIT AKO SA INYO!!!
BAKET?!
ILANG PASKO NINYO AKO PINAGTAGUAN!!! ILANG PASKO AKONG WALANG REGALO!!! NASAAN KAYO?!!!
NASAAN KAYO?!!!
WORLD WAR II NUN, BOBO!!
CHIONGLO

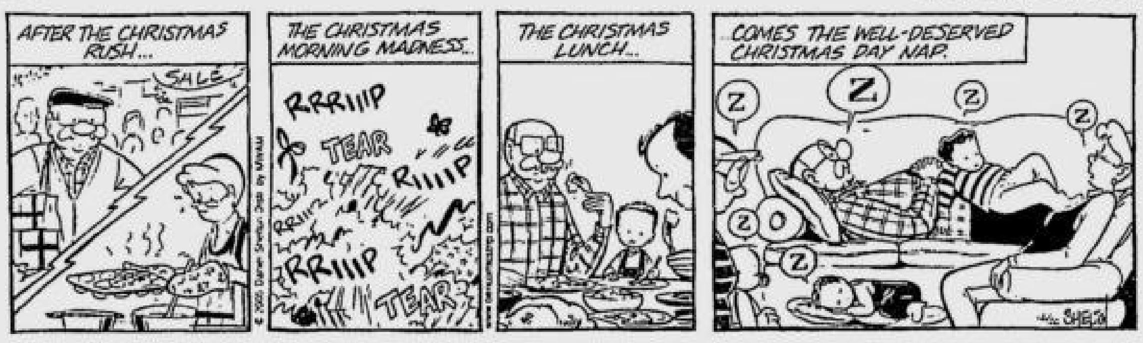
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


HWOWMAYGAHD! SAKTO NAKITA KITA, O BESPREN OF MY LABIDABS! ME' REGALO AKO SA'YO. OO ME' REGALO AKO. OO SA'YO.
AT DAHIL ESPESYAL KA SA TAONG ESPESYAL SA AKIN, AT SA AKIN... ESPESYAL ANG IBIBIGAY KO SA'YO... I'LL GIVE YOU... YOUR HEART'S DESIRE!!
DAHIL ARAW-ARAW IPAGDARASAL KO... "LORD! PLEASE GIVE THIS BEYBEH OMEGA 3!" WAAAHAHAHA!
MANONG ME' MGA MAS MATULIS PA BA KAYO DITO?

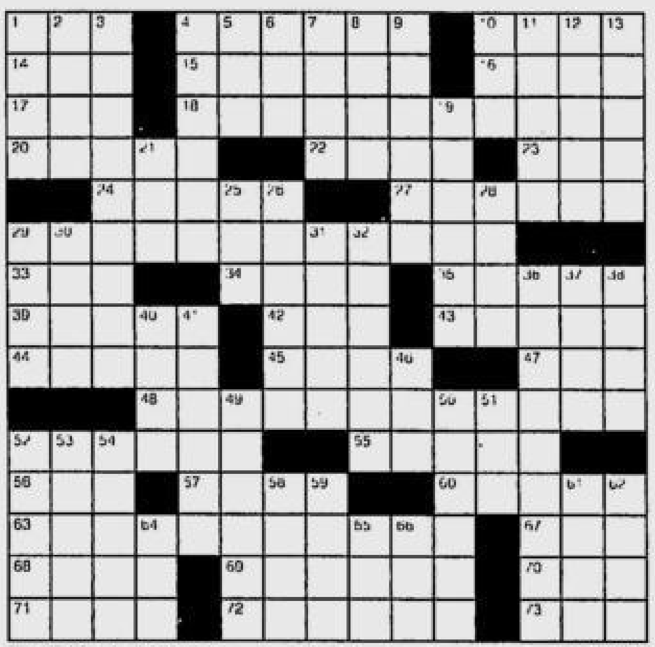
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


AFTER THE CHRISTMAS RUSH...
SALE
THE CHRISTMAS MORNING MADNESS...
RRRIIIP
TEAR
RIIIP
RRRIIIP
TEAR
THE CHRISTMAS LUNCH...
COMES THE WELL-DESERVED CHRISTMAS DAY NAP.
Z
Z
Z
Z
ZO
Z
SHELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Cigar end
4 Hit the sack
10 Sail support
14 Miss Piggy's pronoun
15 Implant
16 Singer Adams
17 Anger
18 Author and his sleuth
20 Challenged
22 Ripening agent
23 Loan fig.
24 Dancer Astaire
27 Gaucho ropes
29 Author and his sleuth
33 Arrow's flight
34 Vigoda and Burrows
35 Jungle vine
39 12-step prog.
42 Taxing grp.
43 Chelmsford's county
44 Out-of-date
45 1997 Peter Fonda title role
47 Choice abbr.
48 Author and his sleuth
52 Goddess of wisdom
55 Windmill blades
56 Medical pic
57 Conception
60 Snouts
63 Author and his sleuth
67 Hot diamonds
68 Reverberation
69 Garb
70 Powerful D.C. lobby
71 Take a break
72 Spoke insolently
73 Totality



By Philip J. Anderson
Portland, OR

12/26/07

DOWN
1 Surrounded by
2 Marsh bird
3 Religious leaders
4 Blush
5 Brian of Roxy Music
6 Attempt
7 Kansas city
8 "Performance" director Nicolas
9 Anesthetics, once
10 Torme or Gibson
11 Own up to
12 Tuscany city
13 Finals
19 Baltimore pro
21 Actor Byrnes
25 Pasture in poetry
26 Malleable rare-earth element
28 Black cuckoos
29 John Irving hero
30 Surface size
31 Actress Oberon
32 Useful qualities
36 Hit men
37 Requisite
38 Shaft from Detroit
40 1975 Wimbledon champion
41 Small brimless cap
46 Greek letter
49 Indian fabric
50 Broke a commandment
51 Middle East grp.
52 Fossil resin
53 Jiffy
54 Peak points
58 Como _ Usted?
59 Does something
61 Tan shade
62 Clothing line
64 Acquired
65 Towel word
66 Exist

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved

E	T	C	H	■	A	L	B	A	N	■	H	A	S	H
S	H	O	O	■	S	A	U	N	A	■	O	S	L	O
T	E	A	L	■	S	I	L	A	S	■	L	E	A	R
H	O	L	D	B	A	C	K	T	H	E	D	A	W	N
■	■	■	I	R	M	A	■	■	E	R	A	■	■	■
A	E	T	N	A	■	L	P	S	■	E	L	M	A	N
S	C	A	G	G	S	■	H	O	I	■	L	A	L	A
H	O	S	P	I	T	A	L	I	Z	A	T	I	O	N
E	L	S	A	■	R	K	O	■	E	T	H	N	I	C
R	I	O	T	S	■	C	X	C	■	T	E	E	N	Y
■	■	■	T	R	U	■	■	O	D	I	C	■	■	■
H	O	M	E	O	P	A	T	H	I	C	A	L	L	Y
E	V	E	R	■	S	L	E	E	T	■	R	O	U	E
M	A	N	N	■	E	V	E	R	T	■	D	I	A	G
P	L	U	S	■	T	A	N	E	Y	■	S	N	U	G

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12/26/07

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: You have grand ambitions. And because you're persevering in a methodical manner, you will not give up. Quite often, your views are at odds with those of society. You're an independent thinker. You're also not afraid to speak your mind. You're a careful planner. That's why you'll give much thought to an important decision you're going to make this year.

Birthdate of: Ozzie Smith, baseball player; Henry Miller, writer; John Walsh, TV host

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Be careful you don't exaggerate too much today. It's easy to embroider the truth. And while sometimes you hate to ruin a good story with the facts, you do want others to believe you, don't you?

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Be careful in financial matters today. It's easy to overestimate something or go overboard. Think twice before you part with your hard-earned cash!

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You're feeling unusually aggressive lately. In large measure, this is just strongly increased confidence. Nevertheless, be kind to the little people.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Stay alert! Possibly, someone is working against your best interests. If you think something fishy is going on, it probably is.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Any kind of group activity will appeal to you now. Join classes, enjoy sports, get active with others. Avoid arguments or tension with one friend in particular.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Because your ambition is aroused, you can accomplish a lot today. Just make sure you don't promise more than you can deliver, especially to parents, bosses and VIPs. Be sensible.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Seek out adventure today. Matters connected with publishing, medicine, the law and higher education will go well. If you travel anywhere, you'll be enthusiastic!

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Your passions are aroused today. You feel rather bold and daring. Just make sure you don't give away the farm in a moment of generosity and bravado.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You might fall into a competitive way of relating with loved ones or partners today. It's sort of a one-upmanship game. Although this is fun, it also can be alienating to others, especially if they lose.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Don't attempt more than you can handle easily at work today. You might think that something looks easier than it is. Allow extra time for everything.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Be careful gambling today. Think twice before you take any risks, especially playing sports. Don't make promises to children that you can't keep.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Chaotic activity at home is likely now. Don't stir the pot. Don't begin projects that are just too big to finish. You'll only regret it in the end. Be careful about promises you make to family members.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis SudoKu

By Dave Green

						4	3	
					2	9	6	7
				3	8	5		2
			9	6		1	7	5
		3	2					
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Difficulty Level ★★★

12/26

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

5	7	4	1	6	2	8	9	3
6	9	1	8	3	5	7	4	2
8	3	2	7	4	9	5	1	6
7	1	3	9	5	8	6	2	4
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2	8	6	3	1	4	9	5	7
3	6	8	5	2	1	4	7	9
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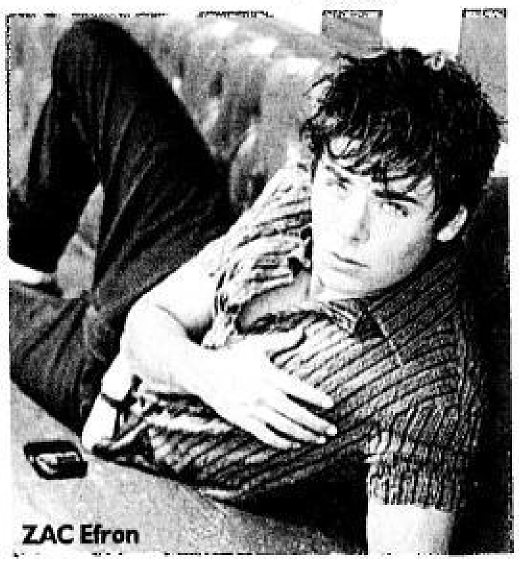
Difficulty Level ★★

KATHERINE Heigl


ZAC Efron

Newcomers and scandal subjects, overnight sensations and authentic talents—these are the people who hit the headlines

Noisemakers . . .

From page C1

dental overdose, opened a floodgate of questions and mysteries with her passing. Who is the real father of her daughter Dannielynn? Was she really legally married to her personal attorney, Howard K. Stern? Larry Birkhead was eventually proven to be the biological dad, but even he wasn't spared from intrigues. Questions about his sexual preference surfaced and some people started doubting his parental capabilities. Smith's psychiatrist is also being investigated for reportedly over-prescribing pills.

Chris Benoit. Not only did the wrestler, 40, commit suicide in June 24, he also murdered his wife and his 7-year-old son before taking his own life. There are speculations that he was over-prescribed testosterone, but authorities are still investigating the matter.

Invasion of the young ones

Shia LaBeouf. After starring in "Disturbia" and "Transformers," this heartthrob is ready for his next blockbuster film, the new Indiana Jones movie together with Harrison Ford. With comparisons to superstar Tom Hanks already being made about this promising actor, you just know that he'll be around for quite a while.

Vanessa Hudgens. This 18-year-old singer-actress made waves when she starred in the tween hit movie "High School Musical" and its sequel. When her nude pictures surfaced on the Internet, however, fans were shocked and the scandal proved to be a setback for the young actress. She eventually apologized and is reportedly still included in the Disney movie's third installment.

Zac Efron. He's got the complete package: wonderful personality, good looks, undeniable charm—and singing and acting capabilities as well! The "High School Musical" and "Hairspray" star is just 20, so expect him to make a lot of people swoon for a very long time.

Rihanna. This Barbadian beauty got popular in 2007 because of two things. First is her single, "Umbrella," the extremely catchy song originally intended for Mary J. Blige, which got everyone singing "ella, ella, eh, eh, eh" and was also covered by artists such as Mandy Moore and My Chemical Romance. Second is her sharp and short haircut, which everyone seems to be sporting nowadays.

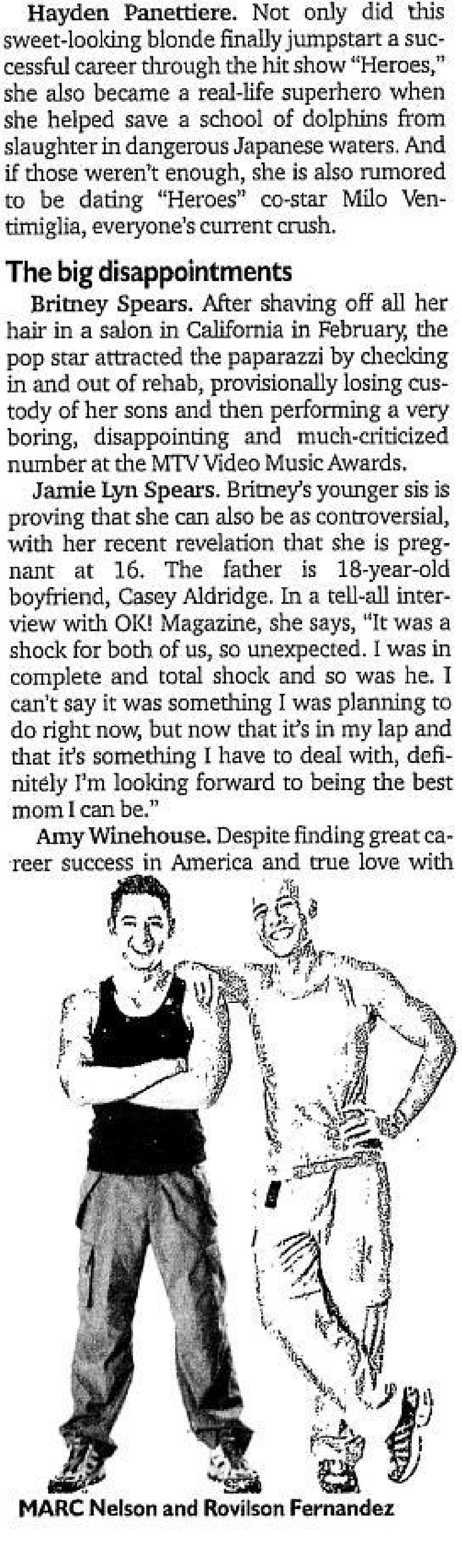
Hayden Panettiere. Not only did this sweet-looking blonde finally jumpstart a successful career through the hit show "Heroes," she also became a real-life superhero when she helped save a school of dolphins from slaughter in dangerous Japanese waters. And if those weren't enough, she is also rumored to be dating "Heroes" co-star Milo Ventimiglia, everyone's current crush.

The big disappointments

Britney Spears. After shaving off all her hair in a salon in California in February, the pop star attracted the paparazzi by checking in and out of rehab, provisionally losing custody of her sons and then performing a very boring, disappointing and much-criticized number at the MTV Video Music Awards.

Jamie Lyn Spears. Britney's younger sis is proving that she can also be as controversial, with her recent revelation that she is pregnant at 16. The father is 18-year-old boyfriend, Casey Aldridge. In a tell-all interview with OK! Magazine, she says, "It was a shock for both of us, so unexpected. I was in complete and total shock and so was he. I can't say it was something I was planning to do right now, but now that it's in my lap and that it's something I have to deal with, definitely I'm looking forward to being the best mom I can be."

Amy Winehouse. Despite finding great career success in America and true love with hubbie Blake Civil-Fielder, the "Rehab" singer's reputation continued to slide with a slew of cancelled performances, alcohol and drug issues, and disturbing photos of herself all bloodied, splashed on the pages of the British press.


MARC Nelson and Rovilson Fernandez

The achievers

Chris Daughtry. Once again proving that you don't need to win the top spot in a contest just to be successful, the bald rocker with the powerful voice overshadowed his "American Idol" batchmates by making it big in 2007 with the single "Home." So far, the band has won three awards in the American Music Awards and has recently nabbed four Grammy nominations.

Beyonce. The extremely talented singer-songwriter dominated the charts in 2007 with the re-release of her triple-platinum and Grammy-nominated album, "B'Day." In fact, many people still can't stop themselves from suddenly singing "to the left, to the left," from the song "Irreplaceable." Filipinos love her even more for including the Philippines in her world tour.

Katherine Heigl. With the box office hit "Knocked Up" and her Emmy-winning portrayal of Dr. Isobel "Izzie" Stevens on "Grey's Anatomy," this blonde stunner's moment in the spotlight has clearly arrived.

Lauren "LC" Conrad. As the "star" of the reality-based TV show "The Hills" on MTV, this "Teen Vogue" intern won over fans with her charm, relatable social life, interesting love life and very enviable wardrobe. While the latest season has just ended, a new one is forthcoming, which will follow Lauren as she goes to Paris for work with officemate and friend Whitney.

Problematic beauties

Rachel Smith. The 2007 Miss Universe hopeful will forever be remembered by many as the contestant who fell flat on her ass during the long gown competition. She was also booed during the National Costume competition and the question-and-answer portion, in part over political issues between the US and Mexico, where the pageant was held.

Lauren Caitlin Upton. This 2007 Miss Teen USA hopeful's claim to infamy was her nonsensical and circuitous answer when asked why a fifth of Americans couldn't seem to locate the US on the world map. Apart from reaching some four million viewers who tuned during in the contest, the embarrassing Q&A is also on YouTube, continuously checked out by many more people.

Proud to be Pinoy

Marc Nelson and Rovilson Fernandez. The athletic duo representing the Philippines in "The Amazing Race Asia 2" is still leading in the race the last time we checked. That is a major accomplishment, considering how the Philippine representatives last year got booted out in the first few episodes. Who knows, they might even bring home the bacon—while showing the rest of the world our unique Pinoy grit, humor and charm.

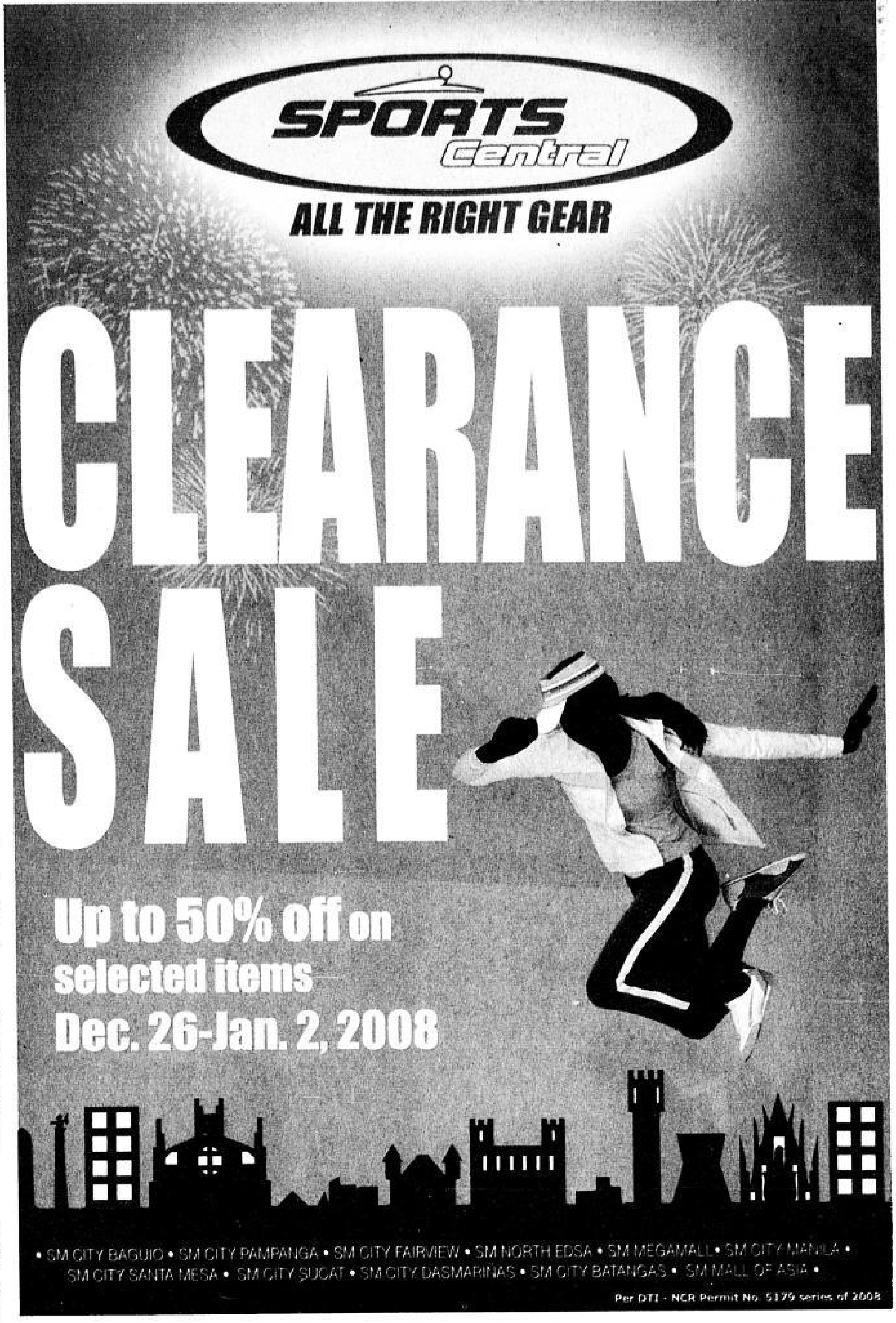
Charice Pempengco. Look how far this "Little Big Star" third placer has come. Last June, she flew to Sweden to record for Ten Songs Productions, a record company that was impressed with Charice's "Little Big Star" performances posted on YouTube. After belting out a remarkable song number in a Korean TV show, she also got the attention of Ellen DeGeneres, who recently had her appear and perform on her own talk show. That appearance garnered her two ovations from the obviously amazed crowd. Go, girl!

From nobodies to near-somebodies

Esmee Denters. If the name doesn't ring a bell, maybe her YouTube videos of covers will. The Dutch singer uploaded her impressive versions of songs such as "Weak" by SWV and "If I Ain't Got You" by Alicia Keys online and instantly got herself millions of fans (just check out her hits), including Oprah Winfrey, who had the teener guest on her talk show, and Justin Timberlake, who signed the wannabe under his record label.

Chris Crocker. After Britney Spears's disappointing and disastrous MTV VMA performance, Britney fan Chris made a tear-filled video pleading to everyone to "leave Britney alone." He posted the soggy rant on YouTube, and the result—laughable and entertaining—attracted millions of hits, lots of media exposure, remixes, and even spoofs from people like actor Seth Green. Chris has other videos where he's acting, but he claims his "Leave Britney Alone" video is the only one where he's not.

E-mail the author at ninomarksablan@yahoo.com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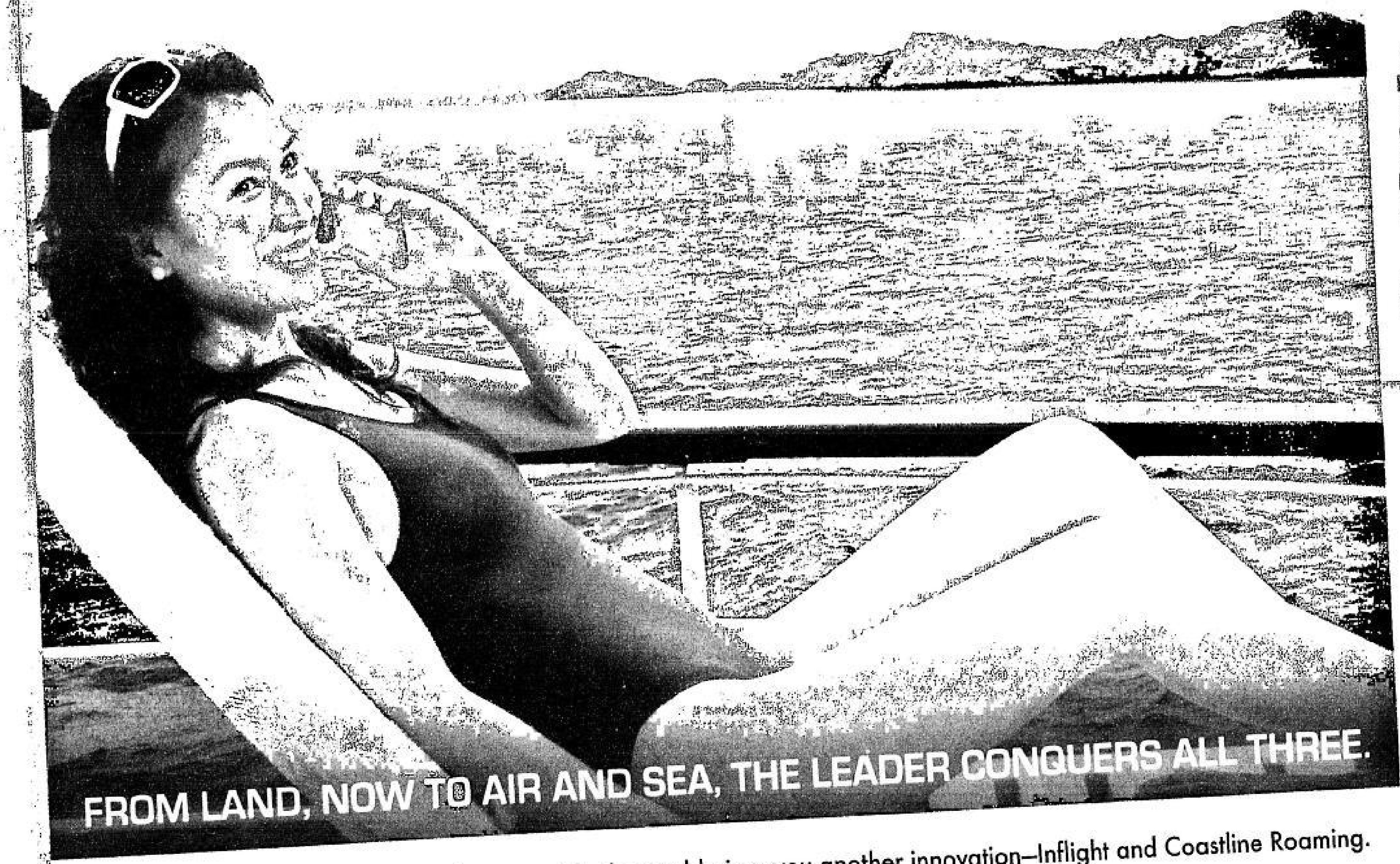
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SMART
THE POWER TO LEAD

MIGUEL Molina swims his way to victory.

Highs, lows and sensations

Young athletes dominated the sports headlines this year

By Jasmine W. Payo
Sports Reporter

WHEN FILIPINO CHESS sensation Wesley So recently emerged as the seventh youngest Grandmaster in the world, the feat turned out to be a fitting highlight in a year when young athletes dominated the sports headlines.

So, a high-school sophomore remarkably earned the coveted Grandmaster title at 14 years old, one month and 28 days.

"I'm very happy. This is already a beautiful Christmas gift for me," said So, who also holds the distinction of being the country's youngest chess Olympian at 12.

Just a week later, swimmer Miguel Molina made waves by winning the Most Valuable Player plum in the 24th Southeast Asian Games after a dominating pool performance.

The 23-year-old Molina captured four gold medals by ruling the 200-meter and 400-meter individual medley, the 200-meter breaststroke and the 4x100 medley relay.

Also making a big splash were Molina's fellow United States-trained Filipino swimmers.

Daniel Coakley, the 17-year-old great grandson of two-time bronze medalist Teofilo Yldefonso, scooped a gold by shattering the SEA Games' 50-meter freestyle record.

Nineteen-year-old JB Walsh also came up with a record-breaking performance in the 200-meter butterfly, while another teen, 18-year-old Ryan Arabejo, plucked two golds in the 200-meter backstroke and 1500-meter freestyle.

"We know that we can compete in the world level," Philippine Amateur Swimming Association president Mark Joseph said of the four swimmers, who all qualified to compete in the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Top marksmen

The Philippine team that competed at the 2007 Australasia Practical Shooting Championships in Pattaya, Thailand this month also gave Filipinos a big reason to celebrate.

The team captured the overall Open Team Division title leaving Australia in second place and Czech Republic in third. The Philippines' Jeufro "Jag" Lejano, who was the modified division champion of the 2005 World Shoot in Ecuador, captured the overall open division title, besting 600 marksmen from different parts of the globe.

Four other Pinoys placed high on the list of top marksmen: Stephen Hinojales was fourth, Jerome Morales was fifth, Blairwin Ortega was ninth and Carlos Panganiban was tenth.

TEEN chess sensation Wesley So
RYAN LIM

Morales also bagged the top place of the Open Division, while the 19-year-old Ortega was the big winner for the Australasian Junior category.

Varsity action

Most basketball-loving Pinoys, of course, got glued to varsity action as school pride ran high during the UAAP and NCAA basketball competitions.

Drama unfolded in many forms this UAAP season, yet it was the La Salle Green Archers that came out vindicated in the final buzzer.

The Green Archers rebounded from a scandal with a championship powered by a tested crew led by TY Tang, Cholo Villanueva, JV Casio and Rico Maierhofer.

"It was a roller-coaster season for us," said coach Franz Pumaren of his Archers, who rose from a one-year suspension resulting from a harrowing eligibility case. "Experience was glaringly in our favor (during the Finals). My players are veterans of many wars."

Pumaren, however, celebrated at the expense of his younger brother Dindo's University of the East Red Warriors.

"If only we can slice the trophy, I think the UE Red Warriors deserve the other half," said Pumaren.

Indeed, the squad that looked poised to become destiny's darling faltered as the Warriors struggled in the Finals after an amazing 14-0 win-loss record in the elimination round.

But the Green Archers also had to deal with their fiercest rival, the Ateneo Blue Eagles, in a rare five-game saga before bagging this year's championship.

Despite winning only twice against their traditional foes, the Green Archers sewed up the crucial wins to advance to the Finals.

"This is the only time that two is greater than three," said Franz. "They beat us three times, but we beat them when it counted the most."

Game fixing

Over at the NCAA, the San Beda Red Lions dominated for the second straight year by sweeping the Letran Knights in the championship round.

Ogie Menor, 6-foot-8 Nigerian Sam Ekwe and Pong Escobal starred anew for the Red Lions, who lost only once—by just by a single point—during the entire season.

Yet it was the league's controversies that grabbed more attention with the arrest of a star player for alleged game-fixing topping them all.

St. Benilde guard Paolo Orbeta got arrested by the National Bureau of Investigation in an entrapment operation along with three other suspects last August.

The league, however, maintained it was an isolated case. "It's an eye-opener for the NCAA. The incident was just a private deal between two people that had gone sour," said St. Benilde athletic director Henry Atayde.

The Philippine team, though, made up for any shortcomings in the basketball scene by ending the year with a golden performance in the SEA Games. Led by Fil-American Gabe Norwood, the RP quintet mowed the six-nation field by an average of 40 points.

Pet sport

In the Pinoys' other pet sport, boxing, a bevy of stars turned up led by national icon Manny Pacquiao.

The 29-year-old "People's Champion" again captured the hearts of a battered nation by downing celebrated Mexican fighters Jorge Solis and Marco Antonio Barrera this year.

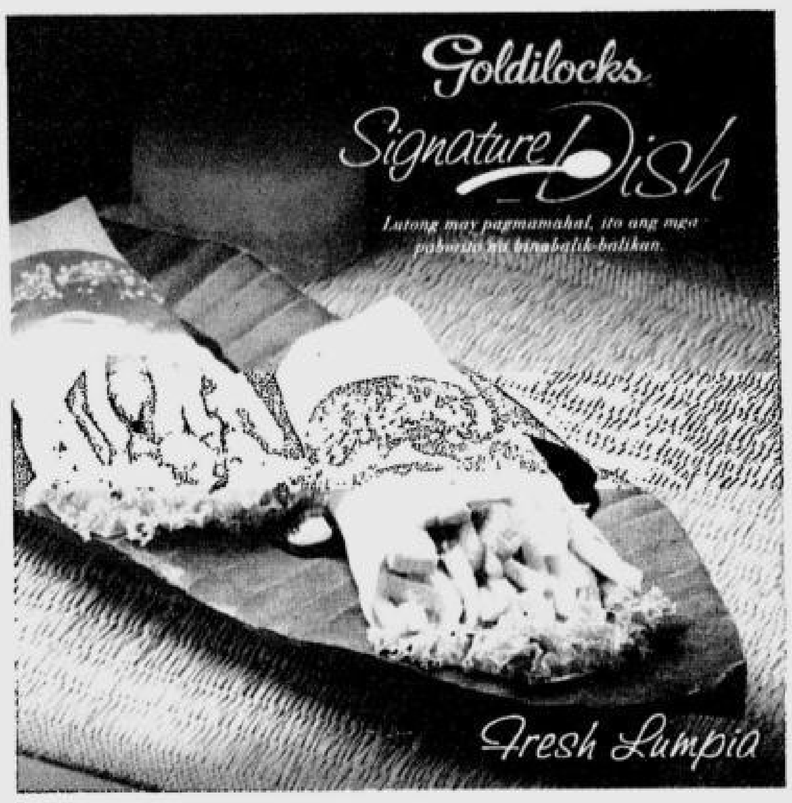
Capturing the enthusiasts' interest as well were mini-flyweight Florante Condes and flyweight Nonito Donaire, two underdog Filipino boxers who clinched world championships—less than 24 hours apart—in separate bouts in Indonesia and the United States in one rousing weekend.

A number of young boxers also stood out like Rey "Boom Boom" Bautista and AJ "Bazooka" Banal for similarly hurdling Mexican opponents.

Many other national athletes provided inspiring moments amid the Philippines' dismal sixth-place finish and controversial boxing walkout in the SEA Games, with the valiant efforts of flamboyant tennis ace Cecil Mamiit; archer Amaya Paz; and other standouts from softball, fencing, athletics, cycling, billiards, dance sport, rowing, diving, judo, taekwondo, duathlon and wushu.

And as swimming's Mark Joseph succinctly noted: "This just goes to show that the Filipino does not lack the genetics to succeed."

PINOY pride in Pattaya, Thailand: Stephen Hinojales, Blairwin Ortega, Jerome Morales and Jeufro Lejano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THE YEAR IN MUSIC

Dream and nightmare reunions, a free album an

By Christian Brazil Bautista
2bU! Correspondent

TO GET A SENSE OF MUSIC IN 2007, you need not look further than Top 40 radio, which, in this country, translates to practically every radio station playlist (yes, even those that ask if it's necessary to memorize).

In the near future, when a "Music of 2007" category pops up in Jeopardy!, it would probably read like a laundry list of hits from acts such as Rihanna, Justin Timberlake, Fall Out Boy and Akon. But really, there's more to the music scene, since this is the year that hell froze over and albums came for free.

This is the year that hell froze over and albums came for free

SPICE Girls

Earth-shattering

Just like Eagles did early on, and the Pixies quite recently, a number of influential bands dusted off their instruments for dream reunions.

The biggest of the year, and perhaps the most earth-shattering, was the reformation of rock gods Led Zeppelin. The band, which now has Jason Bonham, the son of longtime drummer John Bonham, on the skins, recently played their first concert in 27 years in London's O2 Arena. Page, Plant, Jones and Bonham left their fans one message at the end of night. "We were the best, and still are."

It is still unclear whether the one-night-only show would translate to a full-blown tour. There are encouraging signs, though, with rumors of the band in talks to play at London's Wembley Stadium and at New York's Madison Square Garden. The latter was the site of their concert film "The Song Remains The Same."

Another group that got back together was The Police, which reunited early in the year in celebration of their 30th anniversary. The group unveiled their reformation by playing at this year's Grammy Awards. They played "Roxanne," their first hit single in the States.

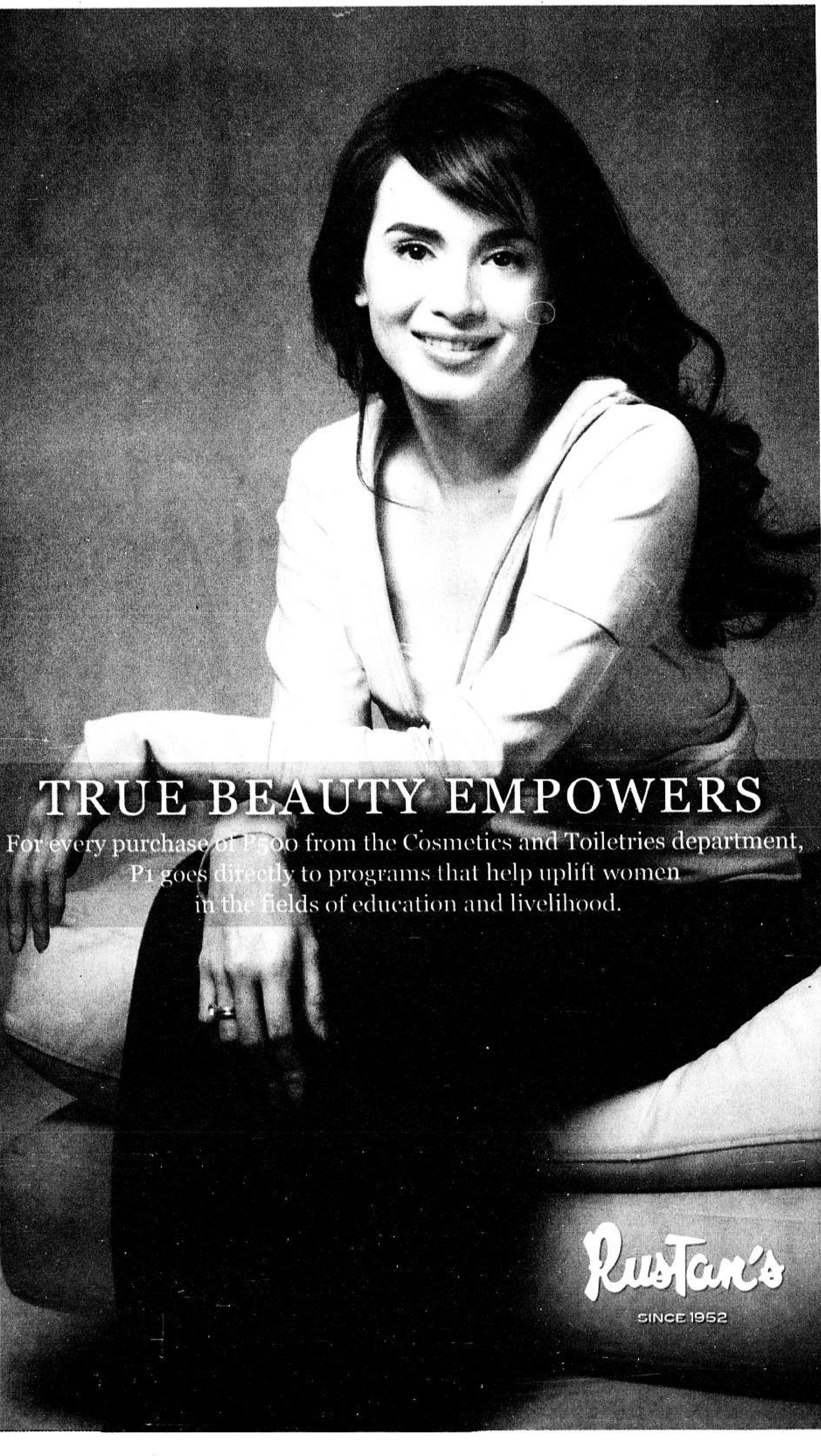
The Police opened their reunion tour, their first since 1984, in May in Vancouver. They will swing by Southeast Asia on Feb. 4, 2008 to play a show in Singapore. Oh, and by the way, Van Halen and Genesis are also back together.

Sadly, the reunion bug also bit The Backstreet Boys, Take That and the Spice Girls. Now we only need to wait for the Rolling Stones to break up so we can say we've seen everything.

Seminal band

Radiohead recently released its seventh studio album "In Rainbows." The price? Whatever you feel like paying.

The seminal Oxford-based band, which has scored hits with its past three albums—"Kid A," "Amnesiac" and "Hail to the Thief"—have left it to fans to decide how much the new album is worth. The 10-track album, available since mid-October on the band's website, can be obtained free of charge. A CD version of the album was released in early December.



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The 2007 T

Playing m

By Jayvee Fernandez
Contributor

MICROSOFT IS A LAUGHING STOCK WITH Windows Vista, but is marking history with its Halo 3 sales. The XBOX 360 releases great new games, while the Wii experiences an influx of crappy games during the latter part of 2007.

Apple consumers are bipolar: raving yet ranting with the iPhone release, while the Mac fanboys give status quo reactions to Macintosh OS X Leopard. The Internet is still democratic, with a huge rise in blogs and "social networking" services. Yet the Internet is also not democratic as people realize that Google can flip your site's PageRank with a push of a button.

Google is the next Microsoft. Linux is the new Macintosh. Now, everybody wants an Asus eee laptop for P17,000.

With core competencies shifting, the good guys are becoming the evil empire and the cult is going mainstream: this sums up technology in 2007. Let's do this!

Ask what you can do for Vista!

Did you know that it takes 48,167 days and 23 hours to burn a CD on Windows Vista? I kid you not. But by using third-party applications, it should only take you 15 minutes.

Windows Vista has been cited by numerous magazines as a horrendous "downgrade" from the previous version. Not only is it less stable, it renders a great number of your peripherals incompatible. If you're running Vista, I suggest you "upgrade" to Windows XP. It's much more stable and it hogs less of your system's resources.

I'm even going to go as far as saying that the bootleg version you find in your flea market is way better, as you can install it an unlimited number of times. Certain versions of Vista only allow you to install the thing less than three times. Innovation? Nah.

The truth is, you can only innovate so much. Let's take the Nintendo Wii that brought down the house of cards in console gaming for 2006.

The XBOX 360 (and PS3) overtook the Wii in Japan last November. This was mostly due to Halo 3's debut (which raked over $300 million for Microsoft in the first week), but it also had lots to do with the fact that the Wii game devs have been releasing products that rely too much on the innovative accelerometer enabled Wiimote.

It was fun at one point, but later on you looked rather stupid doing calisthenics with the Wiimote, whereas it would have been easier—and more fun—to just press a button, old-school style.

When the elite goes mainstream

Seth Godin, well-known marketing evangelist, recalled how he once stepped into Starbucks and found at least five guys with white MacBooks. Five guys.

It's interesting to reflect on how Apple used to position itself as a company that catered to those who dared to be different. But when you find a significant number of people in a coffee shop already using a product that supposedly caters to the "chosen few," then you might have to rethink your marketing strategy.

Which is why Apple has ventured into the realm of consumer electronics, first with the iPod, then with Apple TV and now with the iPhone.

You see, Apple got it right with the iPod, as it was the solution to having to carry your entire music collection in your pocket. No other MP3 player in the year 2000 was able to do this, and Apple was the first to deliver gigabyte-class storage in your pocket.

The iPod revolutionized portable music. The iPhone works the same way. With so many phones being churned out by the big manufacturers—Nokia, HTC, Samsung, you name it—none has come close to actually delivering a user experience that "feels right."

Want proof? Did you know that the iPhone Safari Internet browser holds a 0.1-percent market share of all pages on the Internet? How significant is that? Perspective check: That is actually a lot more than all the Windows Mobile phone browsers' market share put together (which is around 0.06 percent).

The iPhone, which sold 500,000 units on its opening

THE 2007/ D4

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d no shoot-outs

ON

Rapper duel

A dispute between two rappers that was settled by album sales; don't you just miss the good old days when they would just shoot each other?

Kanye West and 50 Cent faced off in the Billboard charts as their albums—West's "Graduation" and 50 Cent's "Curtis"—occupied the top two spots. In the end, West won the tussle, prompting his rival to back off from his earlier promise of retiring if he got defeated.

don't know, now you do. Some great albums that went under the radar

ter Bjorn and John
riter's Block
is Swedish trio's beaten-down-
mance folk-pop is disarming.
erpol
r Love To Admire
st the fact that Interpol has a
album makes this a good year
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e White Stripes
ky Thump
eg and Jack's best since 2003's
hant."
oc Party
Weekend In The City

So it is possible to make a good sophomore album.

Klaxons
Myths of the Near Future
They didn't win the Mercury Music Prize for nothing.

Editors
An End Has A Start
Post-punk gloom that is addictive.

Arctic Monkeys
Favourite Worst Nightmare
More from these brilliant dudes.

Not in this list: The Killers, Britney Spears and Incubus

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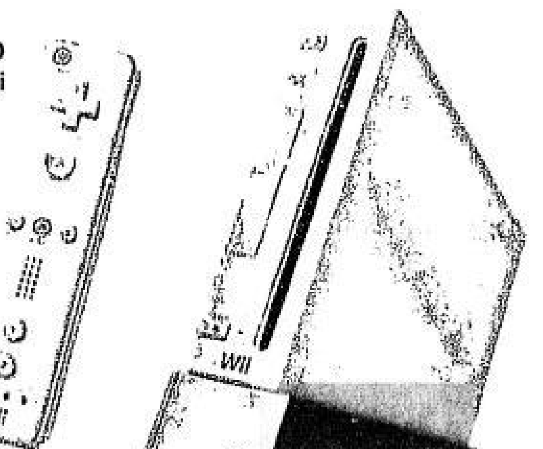
usical chairs

NINTENDO
Wii



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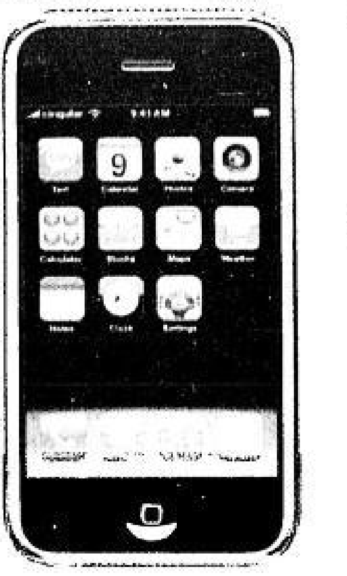
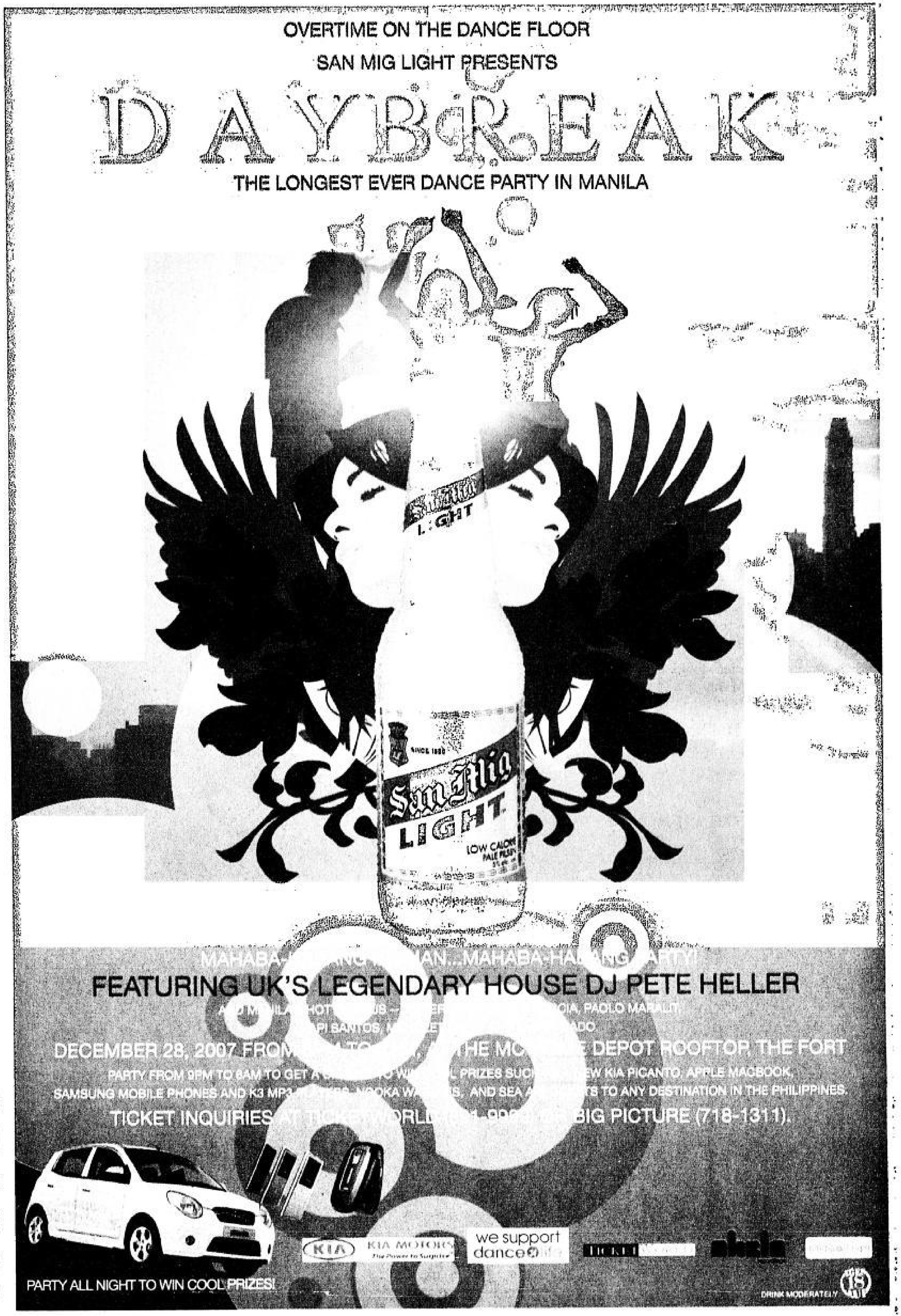


The good guys
are becoming the evil
empire and the cult
is going mainstream:
this sums up
technology in 2007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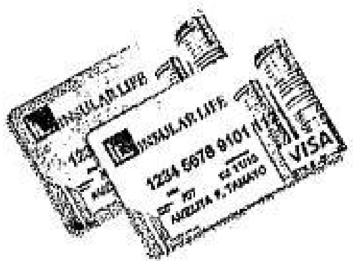


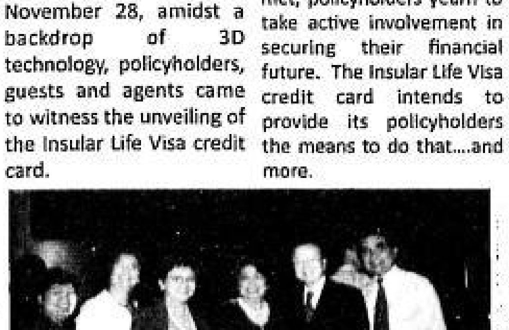
NOW SHOWING
The Insular Life Visa Credit Card

Insular Life Chairman and CEO Vicente R. Ayllon

Hundreds came to see what the first and biggest Filipino life insurance company, Insular Life, was about to unveil. At the San Miguel Coca Cola Imax Theatre on a cool Wednesday evening last November 28, amidst a backdrop of 3D technology, policyholders, guests and agents came to witness the unveiling of the Insular Life Visa credit card.

What if, your insurance company provides protection and more?

Today's discerning market expects more from its insurance provider. Beyond the assurance of promises kept and commitments met, policyholders yearn to take active involvement in securing their financial future. The Insular Life Visa credit card intends to provide its policyholders the means to do that....and more.



Chairman and CEO Vicente R. Ayllon with guests

Insular Life Visa cardholders enjoy the flexibility to manage their funds through the unique Premium Deal-lite offer that allows them to pay premiums over 3 months - at 0% interest. Thus, premium payments need not be set aside because of unexpected emergency expenses. The card also provides payment convenience thru the auto-charge facility thereby ensuring that your premiums will always be paid when due.

There are value-added services that provide cardholders the much needed pampering. The Concierge Service feature allows cardholders to access services of health and wellness partners, gift registry, restaurant reservations and valet services.

Moreover, cardholders also enjoy a privilege points program which allows them to convert points earned from card spending to cash rebates, gas vouchers, dining and shopping, flight mileage and plane tickets. And since the card is a Visa, it is supported by a worldwide network of merchant partners, 24/7 Customer Service call center, CyberStatement and more!

Innovations that matter!

The much awaited card launch was held at the San Miguel Coca Cola IMax Theatre at the SM Mall of Asia where select policyholders, agents, prospective clients and special guests graced the event. IMax was specifically chosen as the launch venue to send a strong message that the company continues to commit itself in providing relevant products and services in keeping with the times.

Top Insular Life executives headed by Chairman and CEO Vicente R. Ayllon, President and COO Mayo Jose B. Ongsingco, SVP for Sales Operations Group Marietta C. Gorrez and VP for Marketing and Agency Support Division Amy F. Tamayo along with UnionBank's President and COO Victor B. Valdepeñas, EVP for Retail Banking Edwin R. Bautista, EVP for Channel Management Process and Quality Management Teodoro M. Panganiban, EVP for Corporate Product Banking Herminio M. Pugeda and SVP for Credit Cards Manuel G. Santiago Jr. welcomed the guests.

A short program was held followed by an audio-visual presentation on Insular Life Visa which was shown to guests while they enjoyed lavish cocktails provided by Azul Restaurant. Guests were treated to the screening of the movie Beowulf. Beowulf, which was converted to 3D, has been acknowledged by Time magazine as one of the top technological innovations of the year.

Innovations that matter - this is what Insular Life intend to provide its policyholders in the year ahead.

To apply for an Insular Life Visa Credit Card, please call 841-8600 (for Metro Manila) and Domestic Toll Free 1-800-1888-2277 (outside Metro Manila).

Insular Life President and COO Mayo Jose B. Ongsingco, UnionBank's President and COO Victor B. Valdepeñas and Insular Life Chairman and CEO Vicente R. Ayllon showing off their IL Visa Credit Cards.

Seen are Chairman and CEO Vicente R. Ayllon (third from left) and VP Amelita F. Tamayo (second from the left). Others in photo are selected agents and guests

SVP for Sales Operations Group Marietta C. Gorrez with selected IL Officers and guests

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PUFFED sleeves were a hit

As a whole, 2007 fashion was slightly more formal than the previous years, with young people favoring more exciting, dressy clothes

A more adventurous year

By Bianca Consunji
2bU! Correspondent

TIGHTS and hats were hot accessories

THE YOUNG FASHION SCENE WAS decidedly more grown-up in 2007, with more people opting to skip the usual shirts and jeans in favor of more adventurous, dressy clothes.

As a whole, 2007 fashion was slightly more formal than the previous years; flip-flops were no longer must-have pieces, as proven by the diminished lines at Havaianas stores.

Instead, ribboned flats, patent-leather heels, wedges and thin gladiator-type sandals took center stage. For the comfort-conscious, Melissa shoes became the fashion must-have for the year.

Weary of the underdressed look that was popular for the last two years, fashion-conscious youth brought out the stops in 2007. This was partly proven by the popularity of tights and stockings, which made a tremendous comeback this year.

While black tights and fishnet stockings were still prevalent, a few brave souls opted for bright shades such as pink, red, and orange. Often worn with high-heeled shoes or Mary Janes, stockings made otherwise drab outfits edgier.

Layering, particularly with vests and polo shirts, was also a key trend. While dresses have become more popular than ever, menswear also prevailed over the local retail scene. Trapeze dresses and basic shifts were everywhere at the start of the year, but the second half of 2007 saw the influx of more tailored pieces. Vests, pinstripes, and crisp white shirts were made feminine with touches such as ribbons and ruffles. Puffed sleeves, oversized buttons and ruffled collars added a touch of sass to otherwise plain shirts.

SMART dressing in dresses and coats

In line with the preppy trend, sweater vests and knits were also big in the past year, especially with college guys and yuppies. Shirts with tongue-in-cheek messages, while always a staple with high-school and college kids, went mainstream this year.

The disappearance of skinny jeans made thousands of girls around the world breathe a sigh of relief. Unflattering except on a select few, they were replaced with palazzo and cigarette pants.

On the other hand, the return of high waists launched a hundred diets, although the trend wasn't widely embraced.

Accessories such as hats (berets, fedoras, bowler hats), skinny belts, suspenders and ribboned necklaces spruced up the outfits of teens and young adults worldwide, if not always locally. Sequins and beads made outfits glitter, and dark colors ruled the last quarter of the year.

The influence of the '80s was unmistakable in the year's fashion offerings. In-your-face detail and bold color were prevalent in 2007, although there were already glimpses of the '90s (with loose pants and menswear).

As a whole, however, the year showed the integration of the trends of those two decades (such as shift dresses paired with loud stockings), with a few updates here and there.

E-mail the author at biancaconsunji@yahoo.com

The 2007 . . .

From page D2

weekend, has already won the browser war against all the other HTCs and XDAs out there within barely five months of release, whereas Windows Mobile has been around for more than three years.

That's the iPhone. But what about the Macs? As Windows users are shifting to Macs (PC World magazine has declared the best computer to run Windows... a Macintosh—how crazy is that?), the "chosen few" are looking forward to the dawn of a new "club" of mini laptops.

You might have seen them around—the ASUS branded "eee" notebooks that go from anywhere between P9,000 to P17,000. They run Linux, an open source operating system that brings a different sort of prestige because it's free to use but isn't anything near mainstream. That is, until maybe in the next few months.

With so many people buying these things, tech sites and blogs have been posting Linux 101 crash courses to help users hack their way through the software. All of that, so anyone can blog and podcast from anywhere.

As blogs grow at a crazy geometric number, so do the social networking sites. FaceBook is hot worldwide. Friendster is still the mainstream site back home. Your online reputation is becoming more valuable to your next employer; yes, HR departments do search for your name on Google.

People forget that setting up blogs and social network profiles have some impact on one's online reputation and identity. Take, for instance, the wildfire spread online of the Malu Fernandez controversy. Nasty, but it can't be helped. These days, your online rep is as good as your real life.

Some lessons

Three things I learned this year from the technology industry:

1. You can't stay with your core competence forever. At some point, you would have to innovate. This isn't the '50s anymore. Things move just too damn fast.

2. You can't have your business model rely on just one system. Case in point: bloggers were relying on Google's PageRank system to value link selling. When Google screwed up the system by penalizing link sellers, a lot of tier-1 professional bloggers lost a significant amount of income.

3. Microsoft should stop making operating systems and stick to making games.

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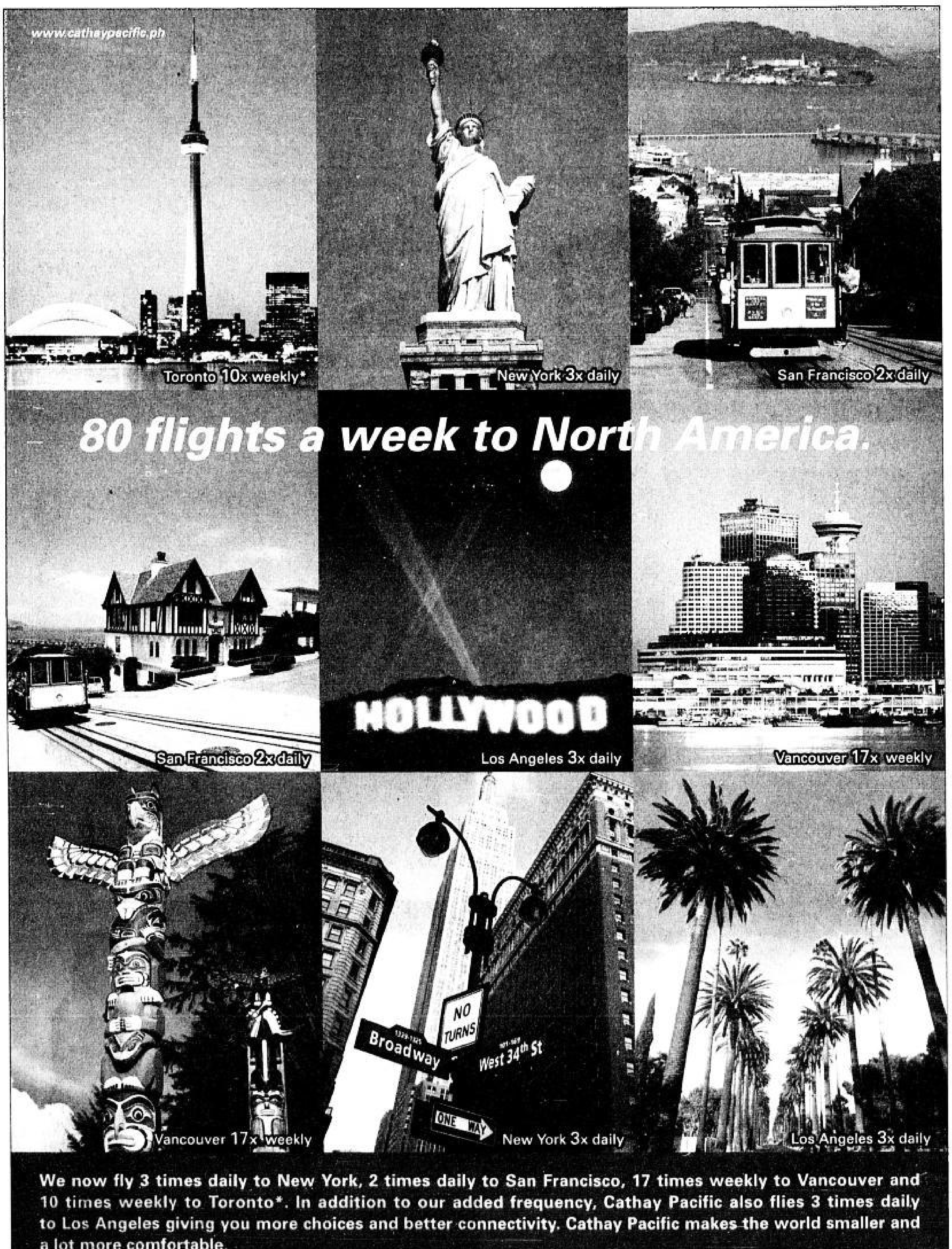

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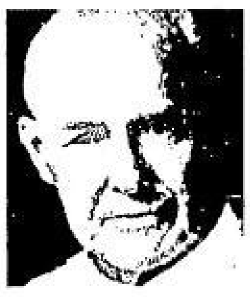

Christmas wish for Philippine television

WHAT everybody would want to see is for Philippine television to look upon itself as an apostolate to serve the people, to present everything as a means to get closer to God and not to keep sliding towards hell or evil. The desire to show only what sells or to keep maximizing profit is one form of evil. If local networks could bring themselves to espouse Gospel values in creative ways, then we can truly say local TV is world-class. *Fr. James B. Reuter, S.J.*

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Just happy to play music for a living

TAYLOR HICKS thinks Norah Jones has done popular music, especially songwriters and "pure talents," a lot of good. RYAN LIM

By Pocholo Concepcion

TAKE FIVE

AS A CHILD OF DIVORCED PARENTS, recent Manila visitor Taylor Hicks found solace in music. He fell hard for black artists; getting to watch them in concert convinced him that he should follow their lead.

For 10 years, Hicks toiled as a professional singer, making the rounds of bars and clubs (even parties) around the southeastern states, including those near his hometown, Alabama.

Though he wasn't signed to any label, he already had two albums—"In Your Time" and "Under the Radar"—both self-produced, prior to his self-titled major label (Arista/Sony BMG) debut which came after he became the 2006 American Idol.

Despite worldwide attention following his triumph, Hicks remains grounded and doesn't mind being referred to as the oldest or least likely-looking Idol. What he's most proud of, simply, is being a musician.

How did your parents' divorce affect you?

Any child who goes through a divorce has to find a happy place. For me, music was that happy place. It became my passion and outlet for my feelings.

How did you find the music that you love?

I first heard Sam Cooke and Ray Charles on the radio, in a program called AM Gold.

Was there a conscious effort to emulate these influences?

Yeah, but once you hear all these great artists and musicians, you want to recreate something for yourself. That's when you try to take off and create your own music.

What was the biggest difference between your first two independent albums and the major label debut?

The first two were my music, songs that I've written. The third had other songwriters and producers. That was a great learning experience which helped me become a better recording artist.

How do you rate the first two albums?

I think the first one definitely needed some work. The second one was the better attempt. And the third was me understanding what it was like to have a bigger production.

You described the third album as organic.

What I tried to accomplish was take some of the organic influences and cross them over with pop sensibilities. I think I got a good shot at it.

What band or solo artist, do you think, has been very influential these past few years?

JUST/ E2

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Just happy to play music . . .

From page E1

I think Norah Jones brought us back down to earth commercially with "Don't Know Why." It allowed songwriters and people with pure musical talents to be heard on radio, as opposed to the more "produced" sounds. For me, personally, it's Ray La Montaigne. He's a great soul singer.

Do you remember watching a concert that changed your life?

I was 6 or 7 when I saw Lionel Richie and Tina Turner in concert. Seeing those two performers, right off the bat, didn't hurt anything.

You look more fashionable now. Do you have a stylist?

I go shopping and comb my hair just like everybody else. But you know what? I take that back, 'cause very little do I comb my hair, although I put gel in it.

Have you ever thought of dyeing your salt-and-pepper hair?

No. I would be scared to [do that] because nobody would know who I am.

What if it all turns white?

Then I may have to reconsider.

You were referred to as the oldest American Idol in the early part of the contest. Did that affect you?

You could say I was the oldest and the wisest! I knew it was up to America to vote. Some of the judges' comments, I just let them roll off my back.

Clive Davis (record company boss) signed up

JUST/ E4

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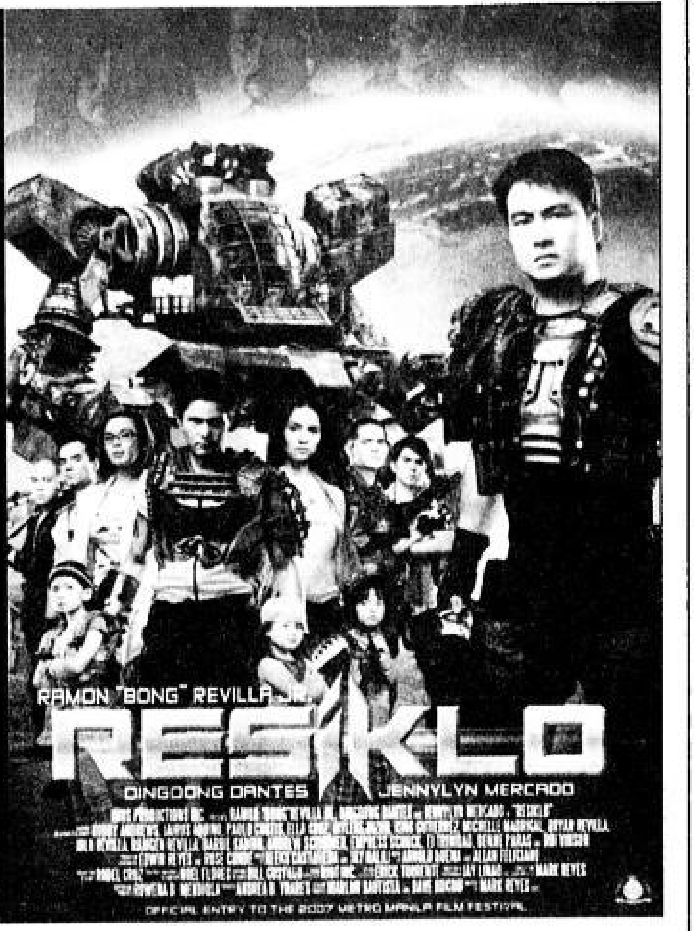

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SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
8 KATAS NG SAUDI
9 BAHAY KUBO
10 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL
11 RESERVED
12 RESERVED

SM VALENZUELA 293-3917
RESIKLO
SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
3 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
4 ENTENG KABISOTE

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2 RESERVED
3 RESIKLO
4 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
5 RESERVED
6 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
7 KATAS NG SAUDI
8 BAHAY KUBO

SM CITY MARILAO (044)0332013-17
1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
2 PASUKOB
3 BATANES
4 ENCHANTED

SM SUPERCENTER MOLINO (046)474-3100
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
2 RESIKLO
3 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
4 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL

SM CITY DASMARINAS (046)4323201-04
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
2 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL
4 RESIKLO

NOW OPEN
SM CITY TAYTAY 286-2602 to 04
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
2 RESIKLO
3 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO

SM CITY LIPA (043) 784-0187
1 RESIKLO
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
3 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL

SM CITY PAMPANGA (045)9637081-85
1 RESIKLO
2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL
3 BAHAY KUBO
4 KATAS NG SAUDI
5 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 4

SM CITY STA. ROSA (049)5340811
RESIKLO
2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
4 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO

SM CITY LUCENA (042)7108977-80
ENTENG KABISOTE 4
2 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL
4 KATAS NG SAUDI

SM CITY BAGUIO (074)6197838-39
1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL
2 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
3 RESIKLO
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4

SM CITY CLARK (045)625-5844-45
1 RESIKLO
2 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
3 KATAS NG SAUDI
4 BAHAY KUBO
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
6 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL

SM CITY BATANGAS 605-6401-04
1 RESIKLO
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
3 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL

SM CITY DAVAO (082)2076998
1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL
2 BAHAY KUBO
3 KATAS NG SAUDI
4 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
6 RESIKLO

SM CAGAYAN DE ORO (088)859-2884
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
2 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
3 BAHAY KUBO
4 RESIKLO

VISAYAS MINDANAO

SM CITY ILOILO (033)3200422
1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL
2 RESERVED
3 BAHAY KUBO
4 KATAS NG SAUDI
5 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
7 RESERVED
8 RESIKLO

SM CITY CEBU (032)231-3876
1 RESIKLO
2 RESERVED
3 RESERVED
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
5 SAKAL, SAKLI, SAKLOLO
6 KATAS NG SAUDI
7 BAHAY KUBO
8 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL

SM CITY BACOLOD (034) 708 1010
1 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL
4 RESIKLO

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1 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO • THX
10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

2 KATAS ng SAUDI
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

3 RESIKLO
10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

5 BAHAY KUBO
11:40 2:15 4:50 7:25 10:00

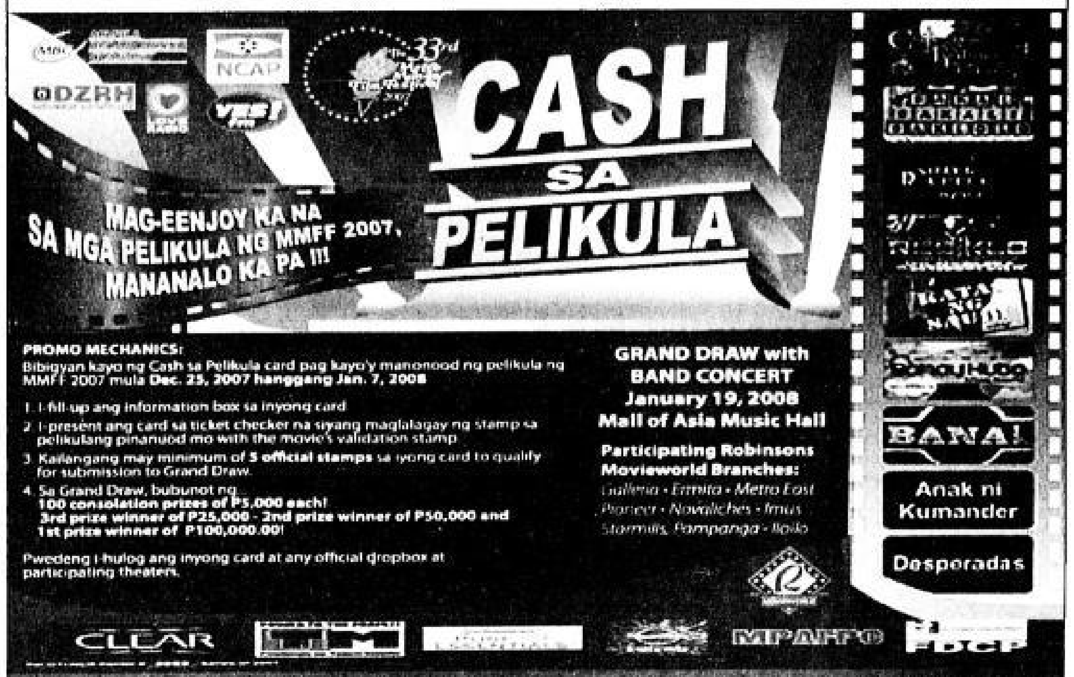
6 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
11:00 1:45 4:30 7:15 10:00

7 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL

8 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10 9:30

9 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10 9:30

10 RESIKLO



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1 RESIKLO
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
3 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
4 KATAS ng SAUDI
5 RESIKLO

6 BAHAY KUBO
7 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9

Midtown
1 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
2 RESIKLO
3 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO

METRO EAST
Ticket Price: P110 682-8193 • 682-8199

1 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
2 BAHAY KUBO
3 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
4 RESIKLO

5 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
6 KATAS ng SAUDI
7 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
8 ENTENG KABISOTE 4

NOVALICHES
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1 RESIKLO
2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
3 BAHAY KUBO
4 KATAS ng SAUDI

5 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
7 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
8 RESIKLO

PIONEER
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2 BAHAY KUBO

3 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
4 KATAS ng SAUDI

STA. ROSA
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1 RESIKLO
2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
3 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
4 ENTANG KABISOTE 4
5 BAHAY KUBO

LIPA
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1 RESIKLO
2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
3 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
4 ENTANG KABISOTE 4
5 BAHAY KUBO

DASMARIÑAS
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1 RESIKLO
2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
3 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
5 BAHAY KUBO

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6 ENTENG KABISOTE 4

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3 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9

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5 RESIKLO
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 4

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1 RESIKLO
2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
3 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
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5 BAHAY KUBO
6 KATAS ng SAUDI

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Ticket Price: P70 (033) 336-8070

1 RESIKLO
2 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
3 BAHAY KUBO
4 KATAS ng SAUDI
5 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 4

Roy Simons'
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in Manila
AIM CONFERENCE CENTER
Makati City
January 26 & 27, 2008
9:00am-6:00pm
[illegible]

Gary V stretches his limits

He's giving acting another go

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

EARLY IN HIS SHOW BIZ CAREER, **GARY Valenciano** acted in a couple of movies. Later, however, he chose to focus on his singing career, to great acclaim.

What about acting? It didn't come as naturally to him as singing, composing and dancing. Besides, he hesitated to play "negative" roles, because it might set the wrong example.

Others chose to disagree, however. They pointed out that even negative characters could have a "teaching" effect, because they show young viewers the path *not* to take.

In addition, evil is dramatically useful because it provides an instructive contrast to goodness. If only goodness is portrayed in drama, they wouldn't benefit from the chiaroscuro highlighting that negative characters can provide.

Convict role

Interestingly enough, after many years spent concentrating on his music career, Gary V has been giving acting another go of late. In the 2007 Cinemalaya festival, he played a featured role in "Gulong," written by **Jeanne Lim** and directed by **Sockie Fernandez**. And, just last Dec. 14 on Channel 2's "Maalaala Mo Kaya," he portrayed a convict.

Gary V as a convict? Hey, wait a minute, we thought he didn't like playing negative characters? Well, it turns out that Gary's convict role wasn't such a stretch, after all, because he was *innocent* of the crime he was accused of.

Still, the conflicted convict *was* a different kind of (small) screen persona for Gary, and he should be encouraged to play more such "dark" and "textured" characters.

Not that Gary was completely effective in the role. To his credit, the singer-actor looked rough and troubled for the part. But, the character's more important inner struggle and pain generally eluded him, and his performance lacked the bite and brio it needed to be completely credible and moving.

Unmapped territory

We can say the same of his shorter portrayal in "Gulong," where he was miscast. Despite these less than overwhelmingly positive notes, however, we feel that Gary has reached a new phase in his performing career by playing characters less sterling than himself, and if he continues to explore this relatively unmapped (for him) territory, it could eventually result in a great performance.

To make this likelier, 'ary should strive to understand the "dark" characters he plays beyond the way they look, speak and behave. Some fear that this could be difficult for him, since he may live in a "protected" stellar and spiritual environment, and doesn't really make it a point to observe "ordinary" people where they live and breathe.

But he has to make up for this slack, because this direct observation and emotional involvement are essential to coming up with acutely believable and gritty performances, which are the hallmarks of competent and insightful thespians.

This piece of unsolicited advice also goes out to other well-intentioned actors who fall short on point of credibility and empathy. They need to go beyond superficial details to understand the positive *and* negative impulses of the characters they portray.

Just happy . . .

From page E2

Chris Daughtry (2007 AI fourth placer) even earlier than you.

Chris deserves all that. He's a rock singer and songwriter. Considering how popular rock music is right now, that's a no-brainer.

Before AI, you spent time in Nashville pursuing your music career, although it didn't pan out.

I was trying to make it for 10 years. I did everything possible and created every opportunity just to make it. I thought Nashville was a good place for me, at the time, to be heard. It taught me a lot about myself.

Are you proud to be called a white soul/R&B singer?

I'm just proud to be a musician, to play music for a living.

How do you see yourself 10 years from now?

Completely white hair. But hopefully still playing music, touring, maybe sitting here with you for another interview.

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CINEMA 2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4 10:30, 12:50, 3:10 5:30, 7:50, 10:10 GP
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CINEMA 3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9 11:20, 2:10, 5:00 7:50, 10:35 GP
CINEMA 4 BAHAY KUBO 11:40, 2:25, 5:10 7:55, 10:35 GP
CINEMA 5 RESIKLO 10:30, 12:50, 3:10 5:30, 7:50, 10:10 GP
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MUSIC MUSEUM
December 28, 2007 | Pooh | 8:00 PM
January 24, 2008 | Dancing with the Champions 2 | 8:00 PM
Feb. 8-9, 15-16, 2008 | Sitti, Rey Valera | 8:00 PM
February 11, 2008 | Kyla w/ Shamrock, Cueshe & Mojofly | 8:00 PM
TEATRINO PROMENADE GREENHILLS
December 28 & 29, 2007 | Drag - Ons | 10:00 PM
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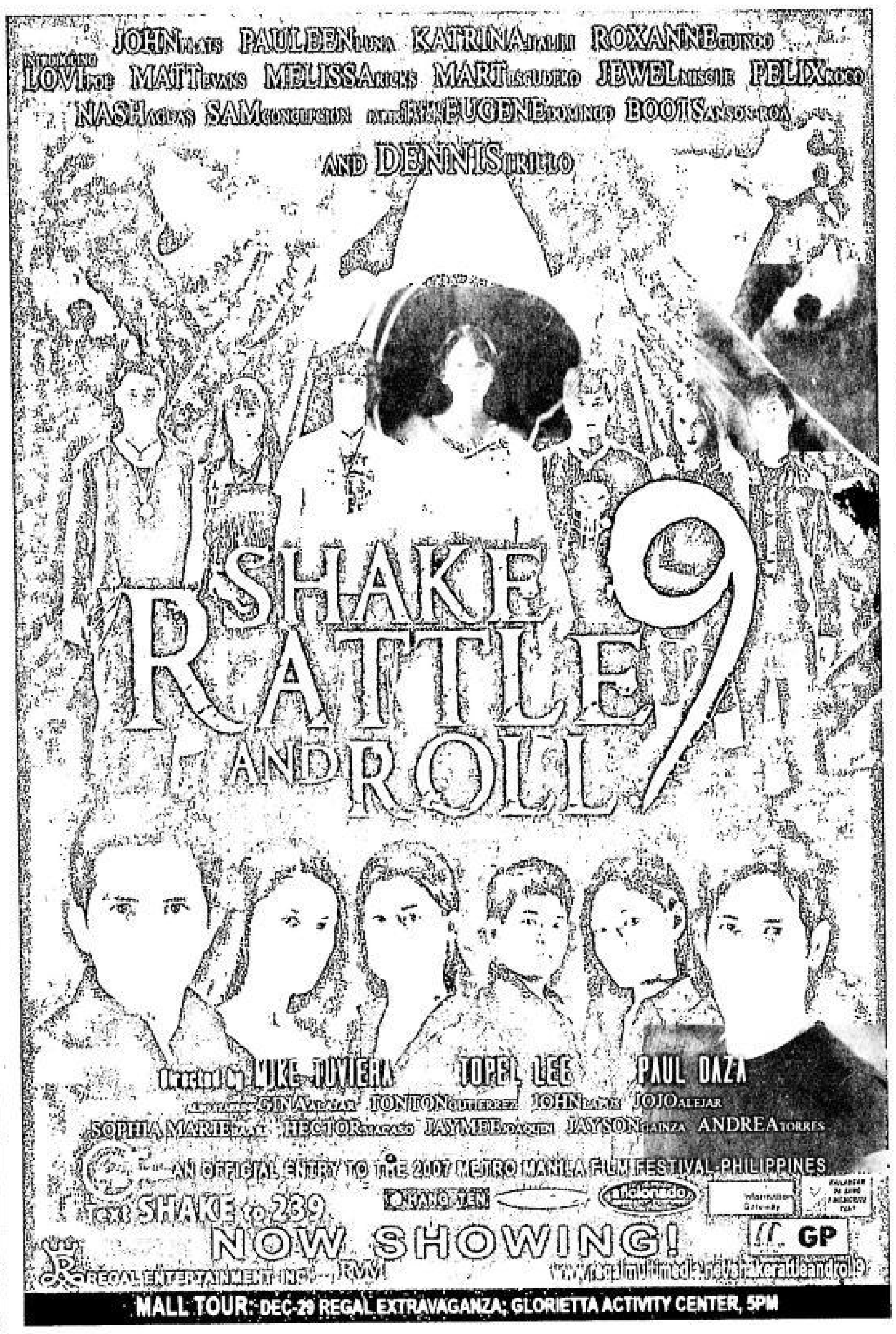
1 SHAKE, RATTLE, & ROLL 9 2:00, 4:50, 7:40, 10:30 G
2 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO 2:35, 5:05, 7:35, 10:30 PG-13
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 12:55, 3:20, 5:45, 8:10, 10:30 PG-13
4 RESIKLO 12:50, 3:20, 5:50, 8:20, 10:50 R-13



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NASH AGUAS SAM CONCEPCION EUGENE DOMINGO BOOTS ANSON-ROA
AND DENNIS TRILLO
SHAKE RATTLE AND ROLL 9
MIKE TUVIERA TOPEL LEE PAUL DAZA
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A
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KATAS NG SAUDI
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CINEPLEX
Shangri-La Plaza (Mandaluyong)
Tel. 633.2227/633.7851 loc. 171
1 BAHAY KUBO
2 KATAS NG SAUDI
3 SAKAL, SAKALI, KASALO
4 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
PREMIERE
5 RESERVED

Blue Wave
Blue Wave (Marikina) Tel. 934.1927
1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
2 BAHAY KUBO
3 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
4 RESIKLO

CINEWORLD
(Isetann Recto) Tel. 733.4228
1 BAHAY KUBO
2 KATAS NG SAUDI
3 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
4 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
5 RESIKLO

SM mall Tel. 726.6150
1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
2 RESIKLO

MARKETMALL Mandaluyong tel 533.3851 533.3856
1 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
2 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
4 KATAS NG SAUDI

Cinemagic Pacific Mall
(Lucena) Tel. 250.8263
1 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
2 ENTENG KABISOTE -4

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) Tel. (043) 981.0790
1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
2 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
3 SAKAL' SAKALI, SAKLOLO
4 RESIKLO

Center Mall Cinema
(Baguio) Tel. (074) 444.3946
1 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Bataan) Tel. (047) 237.7007
1 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
Eastwood City (Libis)
Tel. 687.6963/ 687.6972
1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
2 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
3 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
4 RESIKLO

FESTIVAL CINEMAS
Festival Supermall (Muntinlupa)
Tel. 850.3571/ 850.3572
1 RESIKLO
2 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
3 ENTENG KABISOTE -4
4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
5 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
6 BAHAY KUBO
7 RESIKLO
8 ENTENG KABISOTE -4
9 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
10 KATAS NG SAUDI

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Tel. (to be announced)
1
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Jade Cinema
(Angeles) Tel. (045) 887.5001
1 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
2 RESIKLO
3 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) Tel. 850.1276
1 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
2 RESIKLO
3 KATAS NG SAUDI
4 SAKAL' SAKALI, SAKLOLO

Lianas Movie City
(Calamba) Tel. (049) 545.7202
1 RESIKLO
2 SAKAL' SAKALI, SAKLOLO
3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
4 BAHAY KUBO
5 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4

CINEMA 2000 Movie Theaters of the New Millenium
Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Makati) Tel. 816.4214/ 16
1 RESIKLO
2 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
3 SAKAL, SAKALI, KASALO
4 KATAS NG SAUDI

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) Tel. (049) 547.7383
1 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
3 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) Tel. (044) 795.3320
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2 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
3 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Gapan) Tel. (044) 486.7736
1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
2 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) Tel. (044) 486.7736
1 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
3 RESIKLO
4 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta)Tel. (075) 568.6771
1 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
2 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9

Marayana CINEMA (Pasay) Tel. 833.3274
1 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO
2 ENTENG KABISOTE - 4
3 RESIKLO

metropolis star
(Alabang) Tel. 850.4285
1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL - 9
2 BAHAY KUBO
3 KATAS NG SAUDI
4 SAKAL, SAKALI, SAKLOLO

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2
3 ENTENG KA

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Lessons that 2007 taught the stars

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

IT'S THE DAY AFTER Christmas. Time to unwrap our gifts and unburden our hearts. As we anticipate the coming of the New Year, let's look back on the lessons that 2007 taught us, as these following celebs did.

LORNA Tolentino

MARVIN Agustin

Lorna Tolentino: "Everything is in God's hands. We can do our best but in the end, it is all up to Him. We just have to keep believing."

Marvin Agustin: "Luck can be created. The harder you work, the luckier you will be. I also learned to value friends and relatives more than anything in this world."

Miriam Quiambao: "The greatest lesson I learned this year is about forgiveness and acceptance. Acceptance of what has happened and of what is; forgiving mistakes of the past and most of all forgiving myself. That made me love myself more."

Diether Ocampo: "I've learned to forgive quickly and never to regret anything I've done."

Christine Bersola: "When you are a vessel and channel for God's blessings to pass through, you shouldn't fret because God always provides."

Joey Javier Reyes: "Life is an experience both humbling and challenging. It is all a matter of learning your lesson each day."

Rachel Alejandro: "I was always a bit of a worrier and tried very hard to make sure things go the way I planned. This year, I learned that instead of preparing for the worst, I should anticipate only the best. Whatever I set my mind on, I can achieve if I really believe."

POLO Ravales

Christian Bautista: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart no matter what happens."

Valerie Concepcion: "God is always in control even when your life seems to be out of control. You just have to lift every burden up to Him."

John Estrada: "No two women are the same. You can't love one the way you loved another. Every girl has different needs that are quite unique."

Polo Ravales: "Blessings become more meaningful if you share them with others."

Stars at the mall

Join the festivities on Dec. 30 at Sta. Lucia East Grand Mall, when it ushers in the New Year with Cueshe, **Nadine Samonte**, Private Dancers and Callalily. The performers will be joined by the winners of Generation East Model Search, the Search for Little Stars and Mr. & Ms. Sexy Body.

CHRISTIAN Bautista

Gift idea

Have you given everyone your Christmas list a gift? Consider an Xtreme Magic Sing mic. It comes with a free song chip—and voice lessons from Center for Pop till Jan. 31. That's KaraOKAY with a twist!

E-mail wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com.

Cinema board gives 2 films 'B' rating

By Marinel R. Cruz

A FILM ABOUT TWO COPS WHO UNDERgo SWAT training, and another about a young man who goes to prison after accidentally killing a boy, each received a "B" rating from the Cinema Evaluation Board.

Cesar Apolinario's "Banal" got the judges' nod for "correct portrayal of the movement of Philippine media," according to CEB chair Christine Dayrit.

"Banal," an entry to this year's Metro Manila Film Festival, tells the story of two policemen, the idealistic Cris (Paolo Contis) and the scheming and corrupt Jason (Alfred Vargas), who forge an unlikely friendship while in training.

The film, produced by ComGuild Films, "sets a new tempo for Pinoy action films," said a CEB board member.

First-time filmmaker Apolinario has a "firm grasp of the material," said Dayrit, citing a CEB reviewer. The movie is "well-researched," she added.

Almost an "A"

"Banal" would have gotten an "A" grade, had the editing been "tighter," the CEB chief said.

"Banal" also features Christopher de Leon, Paolo Paraiso, Joey Smith, Leo Martinez, Roy Alvarez, Cass Ponti, Ina Alegre and Evangeline Pascual.

A B rating entitles a movie to a 65-percent tax rebate, said Dayrit.

The CEB Board describes Paolo Villaluna and Ellen Ramos' "Selda" as "a beautifully filmed masterpiece."

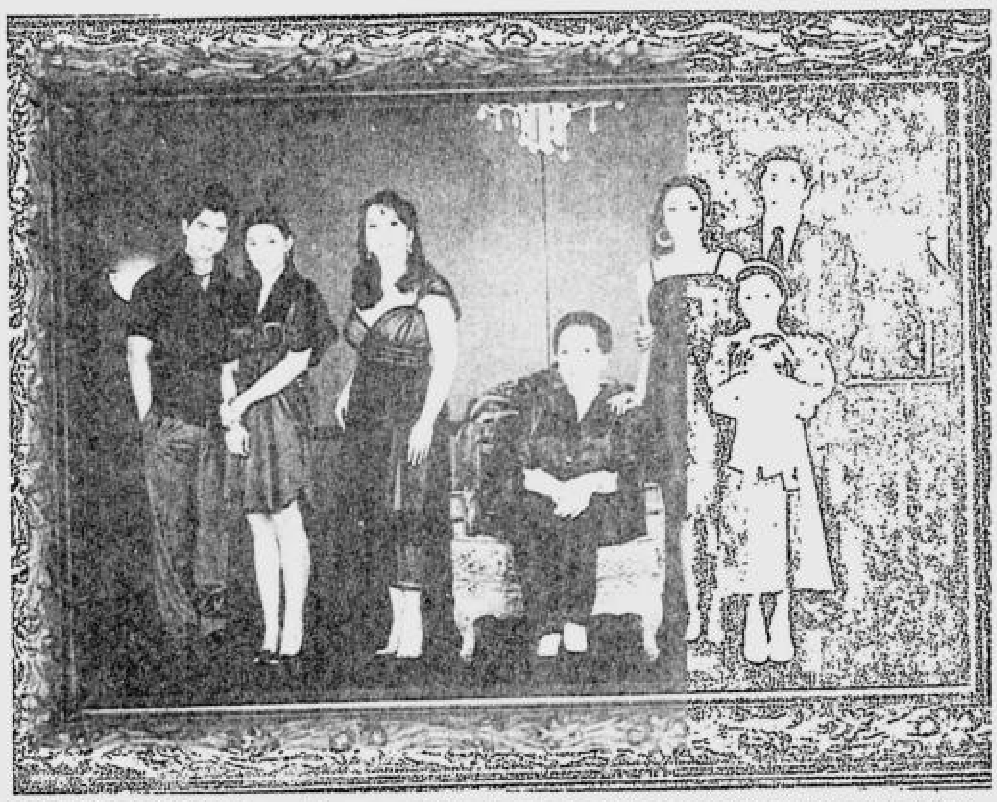
"It's like watching a fluid Amorsolo painting [while] depicting the harsh realities of being in jail and the even harsher pains outside," said Dayrit, quoting a CEB reviewer.

"Selda" tells the story of Rommel (Sid Lucero), who accidentally kills a boy and is imprisoned. He befriends fellow inmate, Esteban (Emilio Garcia). Seven years later, Rommel is living in the province as a farmer with Sita (Ara Mina), his wife. Esteban tracks down Rommel in hopes of renewing a brewing love affair. Rommel and Sita welcome Esteban into their home, "until their intimacy crosses borderlines and results in the undeniable scourge of self-discovery."

The movie is a follow-up to Villaluna and Ramos' highly acclaimed romantic drama "Ilusyon."

A CEB member, however, pointed out that the film was "so beautifully shot that [its director] fell in love with it and had difficulty trimming it." The performances rendered by Lucero, Garcia and Ara Mina were commendable, Dayrit added.

Also in the film are Michael de Mesa, Allan Paule, Soliman Cruz and Ping Medina.



SCARY NEW YEAR. Susan Roces and Kris Aquino lead the cast of "Patayin sa Sindak si Barbara," a *teleserye* that kicks off 2008 for ABS-CBN. It is adapted from the 1974 horror movie that starred Roces. Also in the cast of the TV series are Albert Martinez, Jodi Sta. Maria-Lacson, Maja Salvador, Jay-R, Kitkat, Eva Darren and Celine Lim.

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'Best of Discovery' specials

CLICK!

DISCOVERY CHANNEL FEATURES the "Best Of Discovery" specials from Dec. 31 to Jan. 4 and from Jan. 7 to 11.

Airing on Dec. 31 at 10 p.m. is "Dirty Jobs: Sewer Inspector," where host and apprentice Mike Rowe introduces viewers to a hardworking group of men and women who overcome fear, danger—and sometimes stench—to accomplish their daily tasks.

In this episode, Mike pulls on his sewer inspector galoshes and braves the cockroach- and rat-infested sewers of San Francisco, California, and assists a disaster clean-up crew after a Brooklyn toilet explodes from a sewer backup.

"L.A. Ink"

Tattoo culture

Discovery Travel & Living's new series, "L.A. Ink," digs deep into the tattoo culture and the artists behind it, capturing more stories behind the tattoos, and life in and out of the newest and hottest tattoo shop in Los Angeles.

This season, viewers can catch celebrity clients like Hip Hop star Eve, Queen of Porn Jenna Jameson, ex-Skid Row frontman Sebastian Bach, Jesse Metcalfe of Desperate Housewives fame, Anthrax guitarist Scott Ian and Frank Iero of the band My Chemical Romance getting inked.

The series airs every Wednesday beginning Jan. 2, 10 p.m., with episodes encoring every Saturday at 11 p.m.

Extreme behaviors

Animal Planet presents an all-new season of "Most Extreme," an engaging look at how the best—and worst—of the human world stacks up against the animal kingdom.

"DIRTY Jobs: Sewer Inspector"

It looks at the most extreme inventors, leaders, medics, freaky fliers, crazy collectors, body snatchers, gadgets, nightlights and psychics and profiles the dirtiest jobs in the animal kingdom.

The series airs Wednesdays beginning Jan. 2 at 8 p.m., with encores on Sundays at 10 a.m.

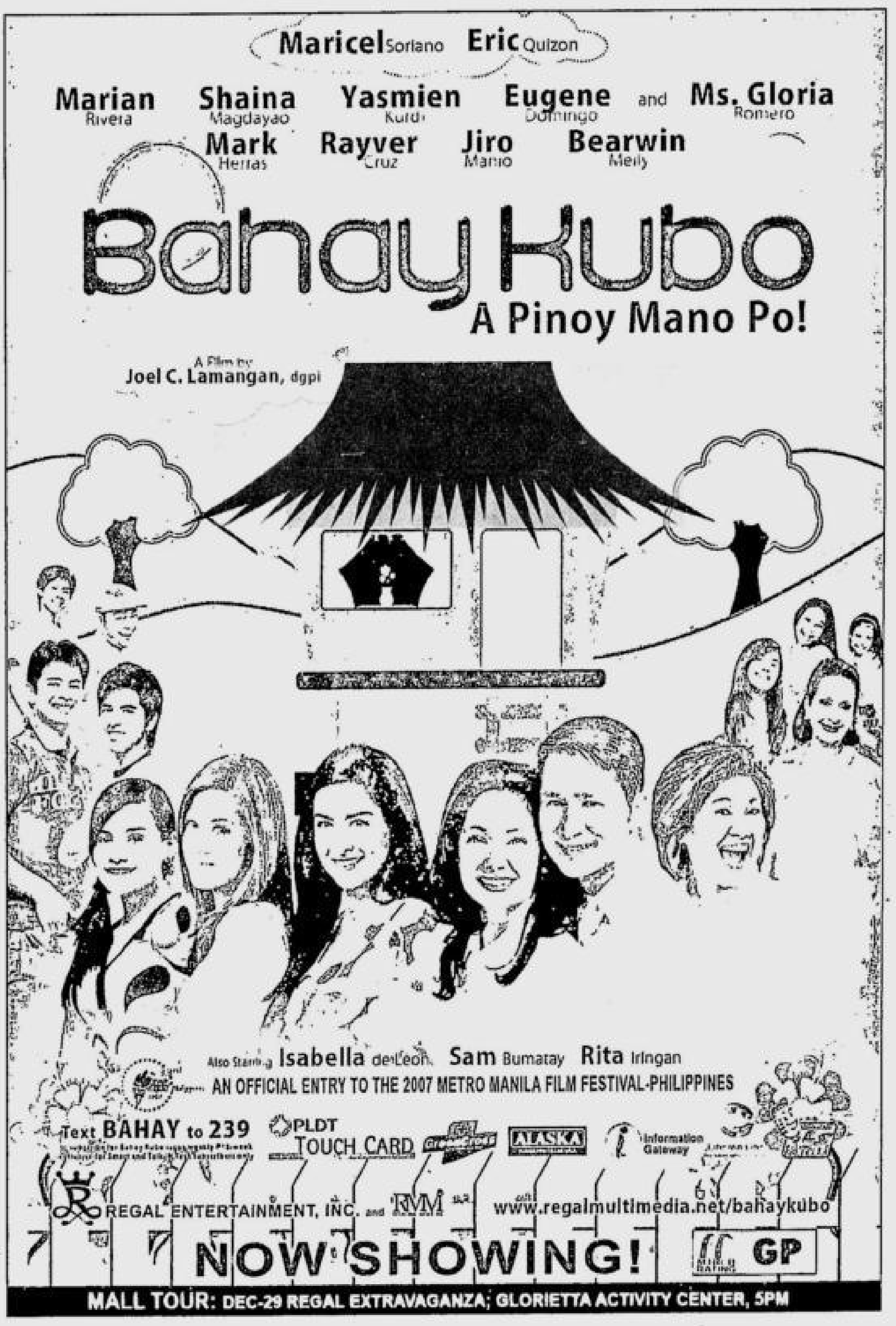
Award-winning musical

MGM Channel's prime time movie feature on Jan. 1, 9 p.m., is the musical "West Side Story," directed by Jerome Robbins and Robert Wise.

Winner of 10 Academy Awards including Best Picture, the musical sets the ageless tragedy of Romeo and Juliet in the slums of 1950s New York and stars Natalie Wood and Richard Beymer.

"MOST Extreme"

"WEST Side Story"



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Maayong Pag-abot sa mga Smart Pinoy!

Home for the holidays, OFWs get a Grand Salubong from Smart Pinoy at the Mactan-Cebu International Airport.

Gone for two years, working as a domestic helper in DOHA, Qatar, Elsa Menchavez couldn't wait to be reunited with her five children and was excited to be spending Christmas back home. So, when Qatar Airways flight 656 arrived at the Mactan-Cebu International Airport (MCIA), she was the first to get off.

Beating everyone else to the arrival area, Elsa was the first to step into a surprise welcome for returning Filipino workers led by officials of Smart Communications, Inc. (SMART), the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), the Department of Labor and Employmen (DOLE), and the Mactan-Cebu International Airport Authority (MCIAA).

A Hero's Welcome

The launch of the "SMART Pinoy OFW Grand Salubong" at MCIA was a festive affair packed with lots of surprises.

"We are honored that OWWA and the MCIAA have given us this opportunity to pay tribute to our Overseas Filipino Workers arriving in Cebu this holiday season. We hope that they enjoy the prizes and surprises that we have prepared for them," said Danilo J. Mojica, head of SMART's Wireless Consumer Division.

Upon arrival, our modern-day heroes received leis from SMART celebrity endorsers led by comedy king Dolphy, Viva Hot Babe Jhen Rosendahl, child star Steven Fermo, and tv personality Epy Quizon who hosted the short welcome program together with Matet Casino of DOLE

Each of them also got a chance to win premium items including SMART cell phones and Wow Magic Sing microphones in an instant win pick-a-prize treat.

Cocktails were served at the arrival area, and entertainment was provided by the Southwestern University Dance Troop and the Department of Tourism's Rondalla.

Three Months of Surprises

A three-month tribute to OFWs, SMART Pinoy OFW Grand Salubong will run until February 28, 2008. Through this project, SMART, OWWA and the MCIAA, with partners Isuzu Philippines and Wow Magic sing, wish to give homage to our hard working countrymen who continue to provide invaluable contribution to the Philippines.

A total of 136 prizes will be raffled off in the Smart Pinoy OFW Salubong Grand Draw on February 28, 2008. These include 25 Wow Magic Sing microphones, 30 Smart Bro computer packages, 50 flight miles equivalent to a domestic flight for two, 30 Smart e-Load businesses and a brand new Isuzu Crosswind XTi Limited Edition.

For a chance to win in the grand raffle, returning Filipino workers need only to register their SMART SIMs to automatically earn one electronic raffle. Additional raffle entries can be earned when they use any of Smart's international services.

Cebu: Center of Visayes and Gateway to Mindanao

In the coming months OFWs going home to Visayas and those en route to Mindanao are expected to arrive at the Mactan-Cebu International Airport.

"Our kababayans are known to have made a lot of sacrifices. It is but fitting that even once a year, as they come home to their families, we make them feel how much we appreciate what they have done for us," said B/Gen. Danilo Augustu B. Francia, general manager of MCIAA.

"It will be a warm and VIP welcome for them," according to Wilfreda Misterio, Regional Director of OWWA 7.

Tribute through Service

The grand salubong is also SMART's way of thanking Filipino overseas workers for their patronage of SMART's growing line of innovative international services that keep them close to home and constantly in touch with their families wherever their work brings them.

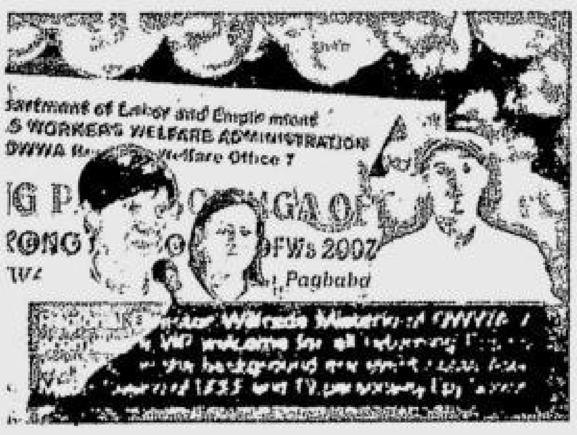
"As the Philippines' biggest mobile network to the world, SMART will continue to give tribute to our OFWs through the creation of services and products which cater not only to their communication needs but also to their livelihood projects," said Jojo Malolos, head of International Business, SmartHub Financial Services Group.

Smart Pinoy was launched late last year as part of SMART's efforts to better serve the global Filipino. Its products and services are available in over 200 countries abroad in partnership with over 400 international network partners. These include IDD, international SMS and MMS, value-added services like international voice text and voice text to email, airtime reloading via Smart Load and remittance service like Smart Padala.

It is because of these services that Elsa and other 'Smart Pinoys' have the fastest, easiest and most affordable means to connect and stay close to their loved ones all year-round.

SMART's Jojo Malolos (left) looks on as Dolphy gives a returning OFW a Smart Pinoy Grand Salubong hug.

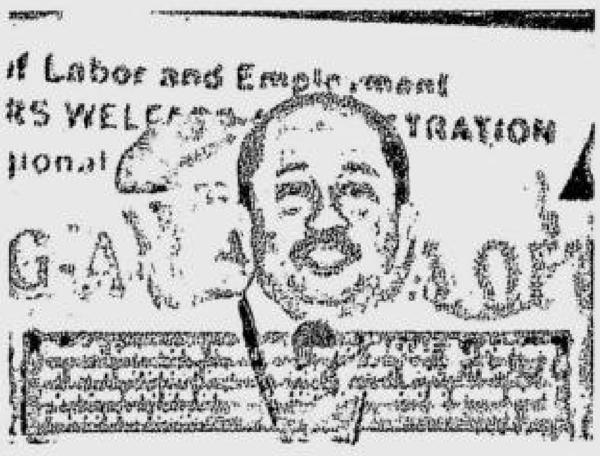
Surprise! Surprise! Elsa Menchavez gets a warm welcome from SMART's Celebrity endorsers Dolphy and Epy Quizon



WORKERS WELFARE ADMINISTRA
Regional Welfare Office 7
PAG-A MGA

The Department of Tourism Rondalla performs with Wow Magic Sing mascot Tarsy.

Viva hot babe Jhen Rosendahl and B/ Danilo Augustu B. Francia of MCIA wel one of our country's modern-day hero



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